VOLUME 5
NUMBER 9

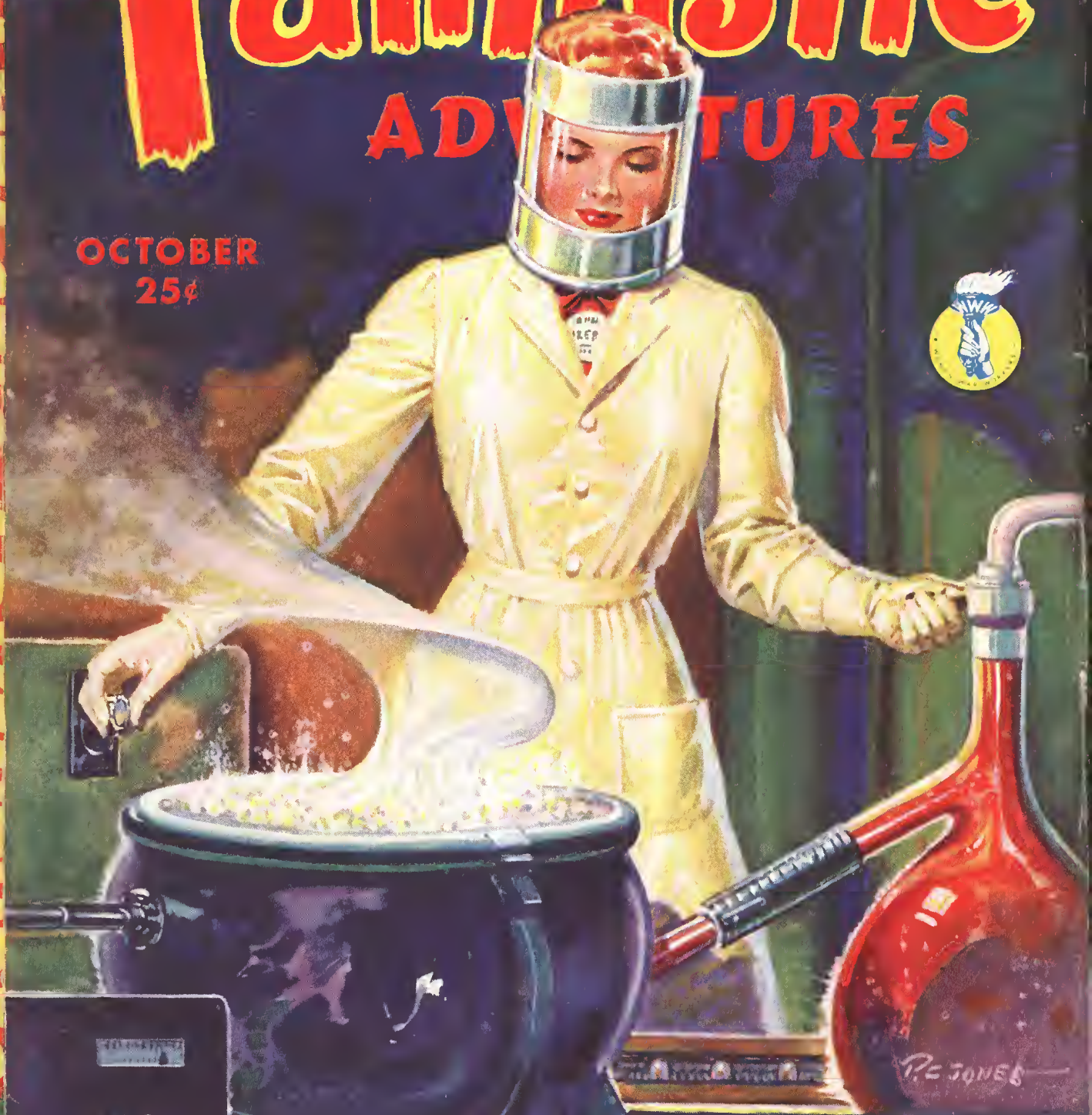
FANTASTIC ADVENTURES

OCTOBER
1943

WORLD OF THE PAPER DOLLS BY DON WILCOX

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JEWELS OF THE TOAD

By FRANK PATTON



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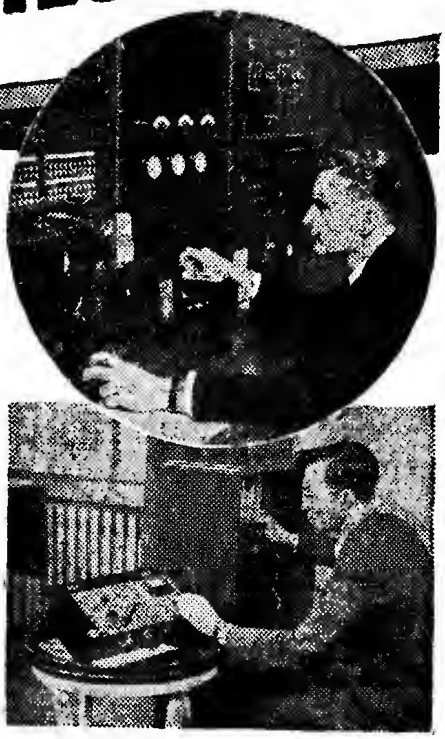


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Front cover painting, dedicated to Women War Workers, by Robert Gibson Jones and illustrating a scene from "Jewels of the Toad." Back cover painting by Frank R. Paul, depicting the "Sphinx of Thebes." Illustrations by Virgil Finlay; Magarian; Rod Ruth; Ned Hadley; Malcolm Smith.

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OCTOBER 1943

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VOLUME 5
NUMBER 9



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WHENCE came the knowledge that built the Pyramids and the mighty Temples of the Pharaohs? Civilization began in the Nile Valley centuries ago. Where did its first builders acquire their astounding wisdom that started man on his upward climb? Beginning with naught they overcame nature's forces and gave the world its first sciences and arts. Did their knowledge come from a race now submerged beneath the sea, or were they touched with Infinite inspiration? From what concealed source came the wisdom that produced such characters as Amenhotep IV, Leonardo da Vinci, Isaac Newton, and a host of others?

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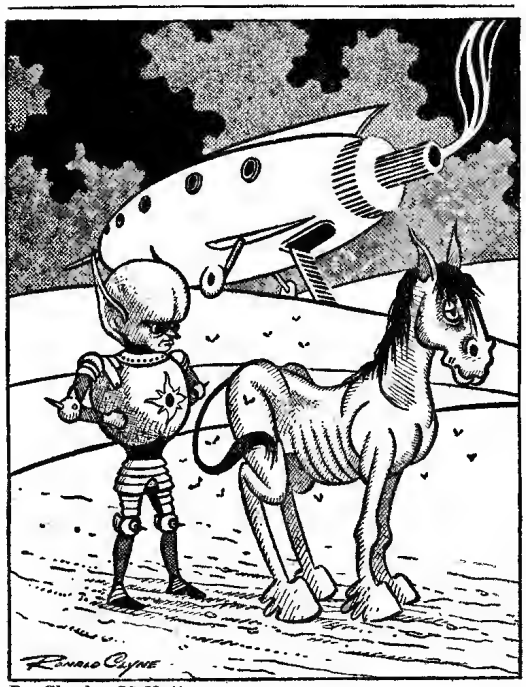
The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

THIS month our cover is in honor of the remarkable women who are engaged in war work in our factories and laboratories, taking the place of men at the fighting front. Dedicated, as are many magazines on sale on September 6, to "Women War Workers," this cover was painted by Robert Gibson Jones, and imbued with an element of fantasy to conform to our story policy.

CARRYING this still further, we asked Frank Patton to write a story around this cover, which he did in a remarkable manner with "Jewels Of the Toad," one of the most fascinating stories we have ever read based on our own world in another and incredibly distant time world. You will thrill to this fantastic account of a world with two moons, and cities populated by . . . but read it and find out for yourself!

SOLDIER WILLIAM P. McGIVERN, who still remains in our memory by reason of a half-dozen stories in our files, gives you another of his delightful stories of those three delicious little leprechauns, Tink, Jing and Nastee. This time they battle gremlins over Africa —and maybe that's how the Nazi's collapsed so quickly!



By Charles McNutt

"I must say, I am a bit disappointed in you Earthmen!"

THE really meaty section of this magazine is taken up by Don Wilcox's novel, "World Of The Paper Dolls". Once more you'll find that the old master has come up with something you'd expect from him, the unusual. Sometimes we hesitate to disturb the mind of the master with suggestions, for fear that he might get out of that mysterious mental "groove" that produces such unusual themes. In fact, we haven't made a single suggestion or presented a single idea to him in two years. To say we are letting "well" enough alone is rather inadequate, in his case. It's *marvelously* enough!

TWO humorists barge into this issue with a full crop of belly-laughs. So, we want to warn you to slip into your tightest corset and get ready for plenty of havoc around your floating ribs! First is Robert Bloch with his usual Lefty Feep offering, "A Horse On Lefty Feep" (need more be said?); next is Tarleton Fiske with "Mystery of The Creeping Underwear," which we present with our sleeves wide open with laughs which we've laughed up them! The laugh's on all of us, and boy, do we like it!

ELROY ARNO does a "Trick With A Brick" which is humorous in its way, too, but in reality, it is more along the "clever" line. You'll get a kick out of this clever little bit about an age-old dodge, the "gold" brick.

LASTLY we have Leroy Yerxa with "Warrior Maids Of Libya", which was written many months ago, and is now proving to be quite prophetic in some respects—insofar as allied invasions are concerned. This one's true fantasy and we think you'll like it very much.

FANTASTIC ADVENTURES will appear for the duration on a bi-monthly schedule, alternating with its sister magazine, *Amazing Stories*. This is made necessary because of recent paper restrictions, and we are glad to comply with the efforts to carry the war to the enemy by cutting

(Continued on page 130)

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JEWELS OF THE TOAD

By FRANK PATTON

Almost anything can happen when certain chemicals get together in the correct proportion—even a time blast!

BETTY GOODMAN was the sort of golden-blonde you'd expect to see pictured on a billboard smiling gaily at a bottle of coca-cola. But this was war—so Betty Goodman was looking intently (no smile) at a madly-bubbling pot of chemicals and she wasn't on a billboard. She was in a war chemical plant making something that wasn't even mentioned outside the well-guarded walls.

In spite of what was in the pot, Betty considered herself just another woman in war work, and she didn't blow any whistles to let people know she was "doing her bit." Betty wasn't like that. Even her mother didn't know what was in that bubbling pot into which Betty peered through her plastic face-guard —if she had, she might have turned a little pale.

"How's it coming, Bets?" a man's voice asked from the other side of the laboratory.

"I'm ready to mix, Pete," said Betty, her voice muffled behind her mask. "It looks about right. Temperature is okay, and color is just right."

"Turn it on, then," directed the man. "I'll be right th . . ." The phone bell rang and he answered it. His voice came to Betty.

"Markey speaking . . . oh, Carter . . . yeah, got another bath just about ready. It'll be down to you in an hour . . . whaddya mean, trouble? No . . . sure, we'll be careful. Aren't we always!"

As he talked, Betty was turning two valves to an exact degree, and watching a crimson liquid flow in measured amount from a huge retort into the bubbling pot. A cloud of vapor swirled up madly, mushroomed darkly against the ceiling, was swiftly drawn off by the ventilation system.

Markey hung up the receiver and walked toward Betty. He peered into the pot and grunted.

"Filthy looking soup," he said. "Smells worse than ever, if that's possible."

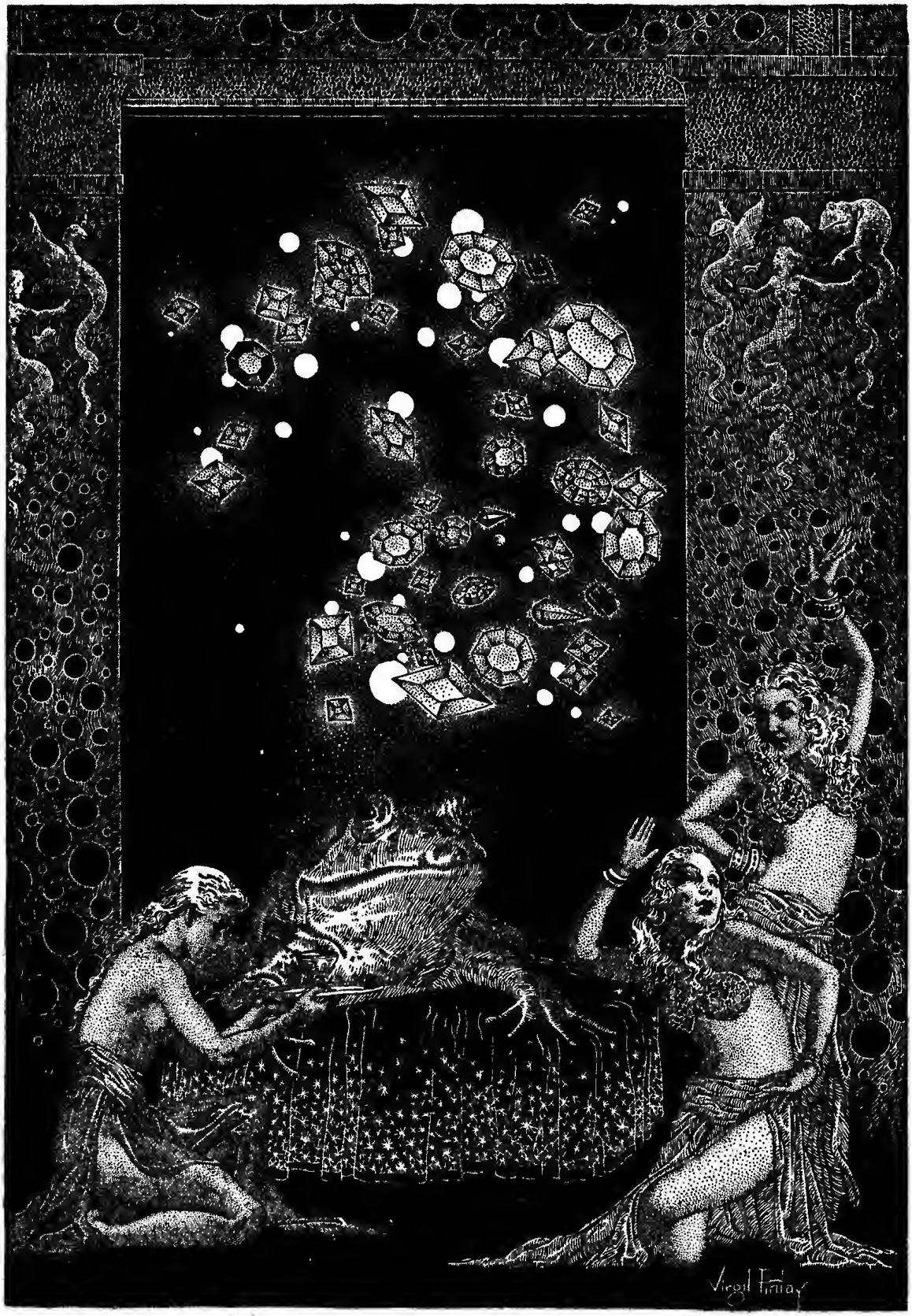
"There is a funny odor to it," admitted Betty a trifle uneasily. "I don't think I ever smelled anyth . . ."

"If only the lab boys could dope out a way to get these crystals without going through this precipitation process," Markey said. "And bigger! Do you realize what it would mean to the war effort if . . .?"

"Pete!" said Betty, suddenly gasping. "That stuff . . ."

"Stinks!" yelled Markey. "Beat it, Bets! She's going to blow . . .!"

He yanked Betty away from the fuming pot with a swift motion, rushed her toward the blast-proof door, literally bowling her along before him as he hurled his big body forward.



Lovely native maidens tended the loathsome monster toad

Behind them a sudden puff of brilliant white light came from the pot, the smoke rising from it stopped rising, became non-existent. Something hit Markey a soundless blow on the back of the skull. He tumbled forward, directly atop Betty's body. They went to the floor together. The automatic door-catch released, and the explosion-door slammed shut with a bang.

But there was no explosion. Just a brilliant, blinding, arc-white light and soundlessness. Then blackness.

* * *

"I MUST be dreaming," said Markey, closing his eyes again. He was lying flat on his back, head turned to the side.

"But if I'm dreaming, I'm not doing it in a comfortable bed. This stone floor is hard as hell. . . ."

Markey's eyes snapped open again. *Stone* floor?

"A *toad!*" he said in awe. "As big . . . as a man!"

Before him, sitting on a couch about eighteen inches high, staring down at him with unblinking eyes, was a huge toad. The couch on which it sat was covered with what seemed to be rich black satin, embroidered with sparkling star-like designs in bright silver. Behind the monster toad was a black, lightless area, framed in an incredibly delicately-carved archway depicting odd sea-horse figures, tadpoles, mermaids and rising swarms of inky bubbles. Floating, or perhaps *set* into the blackness behind the toad, were clusters of brilliant, many-colored jewels or crystals. They were too huge to be jewels. . . .

"Jumping sassafras!" Markey burst out, sitting erect with an explosive motion.

The action brought more of his weird surroundings into view, and now he really gasped in surprise. He was in a huge hall with mosaic walls and black marble floor. The giant toad sat as an emperor on a throne in this vast hall. And before the throne knelt a girl . . .

"Bets!" Markey almost yelled.

But was *this* Betty Goodman?

She was dressed in an extremely scanty skirt which was little more than a cluster of ribbons held in place by a waist-band. Her long blonde hair hung down over her shoulders in a cascade of gold. Her feet were bare.

She was kneeling before the loathsome monster squatting on the couch-like throne, offering a silver tray bearing a golden goblet. It was filled with some sort of liquid which gave off a strangely offensive odor.

The kneeling girl gave no sign that she had heard Markey's startled cry. She remained kneeling passively, her face blank, awaiting the attention of the toad, whose protruding eyes were still staring expressionlessly at Markey.

Markey staggered to his feet, became aware of tinkling music that seemed to come from the air all around him. Before his dazed eyes, as a spell of dizziness threatened to send him back to his prostrate position on the floor, the sparkling crystals floating behind the toad seemed to spin and change shape with seemingly no transition, like the rapid shifting of a kaleidoscope design.

Vision cleared, Markey looked around him. Then his mind went numb with the significance of what he saw.

Dancing about the ebon floor were a dozen long-tressed blonde girls, clad as was the subservient Betty Goodman, with the exception of filigreed breastplates and tinkling silver bracelets on wrists and ankles. And all of them were . . .

"Betty!" breathed Markey in stunned incomprehension. "All of them! Exactly alike. All Betty Goodman!"

MARKEY covered his eyes with his palms.

"I'm nuts!" he said hoarsely. "I've gone batty. I'm lying in a hospital bed right now, raving—out of my head!" He paused a second, then added: "I gotta be!"

Cautiously, fearfully, he removed his palms from his eyes and peered around. The scene was still the same. The giant toad, sitting motionless except for an oddly horrible fluttering of its white throat as it breathed; the kneeling, suppliant figure of Betty Goodman clad in practically nothing, awaiting her horrible master's pleasure; the dancing duplicates of his pretty assistant, equally unclad, dancing endlessly to the music of that unseen tintinabulation.

Markey backed away.

"Go away!" he said hoarsely. "Go away! You're a nightmare. This ain't real. I've been hit on the head . . . that's it! I remember now. The mixture exploded. We got trapped when the explosion-door slammed shut. Maybe . . ." He paused in horror. "Maybe we're dead. . . .!"

His eyes roved over the eerie black marble hall.

"Maybe I'm dead," he repeated, "and gone to hell. That's what I get for jumping to conclusions and thinking there isn't anything after death, and doing . . . well, things!"

The sound of footsteps behind him made him whirl about. His jaw dropped as he saw the figure coming toward him.

"Me!" he gasped. "Me! Dressed like an Egyptian slave, or something!"

Advancing toward him, eyes straight ahead, face expressionless, was a duplicate of himself, scantily clad in a brief loin-cloth, a fantastic head-dress, and brass anklets above curiously woven leather sandals.

Markey stared, eyes popping out of his head, as the figure walked past him, advanced to the throne, knelt in obeisance, then turned and walked back to Markey. Suddenly Markey was aware of two more duplicates of himself, standing beside him. They grasped his arm now, and he jumped. But they held him tightly.

"Hey!" he exclaimed. "What's the idea . . .?"

With amazing power, his two captors led him away from the throne, toward the end of the vast ebon hall, and out through a doorway. He was dragged down a dim corridor, and finally thrust into a small cell. A heavy metal door slammed shut behind him. Then from out of the darkness a slim form rushed, threw her arms about his neck, and sobbed in terror.

"Pete! Pete! Oh, Pete, what's happened? Where are we?"

For several minutes the dazed chemist had his hands full quieting the hysterical girl. Finally she calmed and sobbed quietly against his shoulder.

"You're . . . real?" he queried, swallowing hard. "You're real, ain't you Bets?"

She stopped sobbing, looked up at him, new terror in her eyes.

"Yes!" she said frantically. "Yes . . . Pete, I *must* be. If I'm not . . . Pete, did you see them too! Those—those brazen duplicates of me?"

Peter Markey swallowed hard.

"Did I *see* them? They were all around me! And . . ." he gulped a little, ". . . I wouldn't exactly call them brazen. They were—well, they were kinda nice! Anything that's a duplicate of you . . .!"

Betty squirmed from Markey's arms, her tears and fears suddenly forgotten, her face reddening.

"Pete Markey!" she said. "Is that why you stayed behind so long? Why you . . .!"

"Now wait a minute, Bets. If I was away long, it was because I was *out* long. I had hardly time to look around me, and no time at all to figure this crazy thing out before three mugs who look exactly like me rushed me into this dark hole. And your enthusiastic welcome didn't help my thinking any! Why couldn't you have been as cooperative as that back in the lab. . . ."

Crack!

MARKEY'S cheek stung beneath the impact of her firm little hand. He reeled back.

"Ouch!" he said. "That's what I wanted you to do, but did you have to put all that muscle behind it? Well, at least I'm satisfied I'm not dreaming now. That was the real thing. And it means . . ."

"What *does* it mean?" asked Betty, fearful once more. "Oh, Pete, I'm scared!"

Markey shook his head bewilderedly.

"I'm hanged if I know. But let's check notes, and see what we can come to. First, tell me what happened to you, from the time that damned soup began to stink."

Betty wrinkled her brows in thought.

"Well, first it seemed the laboratory got awfully light—almost like an arc light had been turned on. Then there was an explosion—no, it wasn't an explosion. More like an explosion would seem without any noise or force to it. . . ." She paused helplessly. "Oh, I'm afraid I just can't explain it"

"Silly as it sounds," said Markey, "you're doing okay. I got the same impression. Explosion without any force . . . Go on, Bets. What happened next?"

"Nothing. That is, until I came to. I *think* . . ." Betty was cautious ". . . I *think* I was unconscious. Anyway, I opened my eyes and I was lying on a black marble floor looking at the most horrible monster toad I could ever imagine. It was sitting on a sort of throne, and above its head, in a sort of empty black space, were a lot of pretty crystals sort of turning and twisting and flashing—except that you couldn't see *exactly when* they turned. . . ."

"I get what you mean," Markey prodded her hesitancy. "Go on."

"A sort of musical tinkling was coming from the crystals—"

"So *that's* where!" Markey exclaimed.

"The music *did* come from the crystals, didn't it?" asked Betty confusedly.

"Yes. I guess so. I didn't figure it that way, myself, but now that I think back, I guess you are right about it."

"Well, that horrible toad just sat for a long while, staring at me, then it seemed to swell up until I thought it would burst. Its eyes turned away, and then, right in front of me, I saw a cloud of white begin to swirl, and all at once, there was a girl who looked just like me! And she didn't have a stitch of clothes on!"

Markey looked blank.

"No clothes? Are you sure? They had clothes on—well, *some* clothes on—when I saw them."

Betty looked relieved, and she hastened on.

"Then more of them materialized and they began dancing around. And two of them grabbed me and dragged me here. I was here for at least a half-hour before you were pushed in. By that time I was practically frightened to death."

"And I don't blame you," admitted Markey. "I was plenty scared myself. But," he rubbed his arms reflectively, "if those birds who dragged me here were phantoms, this place has got some mighty substantial phantoms, is all I can say!"

"WHAT about you?" asked Betty. "What happened to you?"

Markey shrugged.

"Approximately the same thing. And now, it seems, we are prisoners. Why we are being kept, I don't know—but I'll wager that toad thing has something in mind. Say, this is a pretty big place too, isn't it? At first, I thought it was a cell. Isn't that a window off there at the other end?"

Betty turned.

"Yes. But it's too high up for me. I can't see out of it. And it must be night outside. The sky, if that's what it is, seems only a little less black than the inside of this prison."

Markey walked toward the other end of their prison, reached a wall, and stood looking up at a huge square opening which looked out on only slightly lesser darkness. Faintly he could see thick bars across the window.

"Say! Those bars are mighty far apart! Maybe they're wide enough to squeeze through!"

"I'll boost you up," offered Betty.

Markey looked at her, remembered her muscular ability.

"Okay, give me a lift. I think I can reach the edge."

Betty placed her clasped hands beneath his uplifted heel, and heaved upward. Markey's fingers caught the edge of the stone window-sill and he pulled himself up. He caught a bar, hoisted himself to the ledge, sat there looking out into the night.

Far off, near a rough horizon line that indicated possible hills, or even mountains, a pale, watery, crescent moon hung. Markey stared, fascinated.

"I see the moon—*a* moon," he said. "But I'll swear it isn't any moon I ever saw before. Much too big. And it's the wrong color. This moon's *really* green!"

"See anything else?" asked Betty anxiously.

"Nothing, except I think it isn't more than fifteen feet, at the most, to the ground. And Man Mountain Dean could get through these bars! If this is a jail, I wonder for whom?"

"Maybe for toads," said Betty with a half-laugh.

Markey grunted.

"That's not so funny," he said. "I wouldn't be surprised if you were right. Well, we can't risk jumping down there until it gets light enough to see where we are going to land. . . ."

Markey jumped down from his perch on the window-sill and landed beside the girl. He took off his lab smock, which he still wore, rolled it into a wad, and put it down on the floor.

"Might as well take it easy, Bets," he said. "Good a time as any to get some sleep. Maybe we'll need it later on."

Betty sat down on the stone floor, lay back on the folded smock. Markey sat down beside her, his back against the wall, and pillowed his head on his knees.

"Funny how tired I am," he mumbled. "Like something had been taken out of me. . . ." His voice drifted away, and in a moment he was snoring softly. And beside him, Betty Goodman also slept, as peacefully as though she were home in her own bed.

* * *

WHEN Markey awoke, it was at the urgent shaking of his shoulder by Betty Goodman.

"Wake up, Pete!" she said. "It's daylight!"

Markey stared around at the vast bleakness of the empty stone room, now fully revealed in the light of day. At the other end was the great metal door that had admitted him the previous night; above his head was the great

window through which curiously brilliant sunlight was now streaming.

He jumped to his feet, stared up at the vivid blue patch of sky crossed by the broad, widely-spaced metal bars.

"Boost me again," he said. "Let's find out what's really out there."

Once more Betty lifted him up and he swung himself up to the ledge. For a long instant he looked in amazement at the scene that lay before him, unable to do more than gasp.

"What is it?" asked Betty impatiently. "What do you see?"

"A city," said Markey finally. "A *city*." The very inflection of his voice portrayed his astonishment. "But what a city! It's in ruins!"

"Ruins?"

"Yes. It's so old it's falling apart. And gigantic. Girl, you never saw anything like this city in all your life. Nor in your dreams! No human beings ever inhabited *this* city."

"Lift me up," demanded Betty. "I want to see, too."

Markey reached down, caught her upstretched fingers, pulled her up until she could catch one of the bars, then shifted his grip to her arm. In an instant she was perched beside him, gripping a heavy bar in each hand, and staring out on the bizarre scene that stretched for miles before them.

What Markey had thought to be distant hills or mountains in the dark of the previous night were now revealed to be huge masses of ruins; the ruins of buildings which must once have been more tremendous than their remains.

"It's . . . it's fantastic!" breathed Betty in awe. Her voice took on a note of panic again. "Pete! Where on earth are we! This . . . this place is awful! It's . . . *dead!*"

Markey's indrawn breath, sharp and swift, stopped her voice. She looked at him fearfully, then followed his gaze around the horizon. Then she saw it too. Hanging palely in the sky was the moon.

"I thought you said that wasn't our moon," said Betty. "It's as plain as the nose . . . on its face," she finished.

"Yes," said Markey, his voice strained. "That's our moon, all right, but, Betty, that isn't the moon I saw last night! That one was twice the size of this one, and it was on the opposite horizon. It was setting. This one's coming up."

FOR many moments they stared at the weird scene before them, bathed in the light of an amazingly brilliant sun, then Markey glanced down. A heap of rubble beneath their window was scarcely ten feet down.

"Let's get out of here," said Markey. "There doesn't seem to be a soul abroad —and to judge from the dust in those streets, no one ever walks them—human beings or—or toads."

He wriggled through the bars, hung for a moment, then dropped. He landed unharmed on the rubble, raised a cloud of choking dust which the wind whipped around the corner of the building.

"Come on, drop down," said Markey. "I'll catch you."

Betty slipped through the bars, let herself down until she hung by her hands then let go. Markey caught her, set her on her feet. Together they made their way down the slanting slope of rubble and finally stood in the wide street between two massive, semi-ruined buildings that stretched for at least three hundred yards in both directions.

Huge doors and windows, obviously far bigger than human beings would require, yawned blackly in them. The building from which they had come was by far the largest of the two, and one wing of it was fairly well intact.

"I'll bet that's the building we came

to in. The one with the big hall with the black marble floor," Markey said.

Betty shuddered.

"Then let's get away from here." She turned in the opposite direction.

Markey stopped her.

"Where'll we go?" he asked.

Betty looked helpless.

"Anywhere. Just so that awful toad can't put us in jail again, and this time in a place we can't get out of."

Markey shook his head.

"No good. We'd promptly get lost in this jungle of ruins, and then we'd be in a fine pickle. Whatever the answer to this puzzle is, it's in this building, I'll bet a plugged nickel."

"I'm still afraid of the toad," insisted Betty.

Markey looked around.

"Notice how quiet it is?" he pointed out. "Nothing ever stirs out here, I'll bet on it. There's no sign of the dust in these streets ever being disturbed except by the wind. And I'll swear it hasn't rained here in hundreds of years. The air's so dry I'm beginning to wish I had a drink already. . . ."

The instant he spoke the words, he regretted them.

"I'm thirsty," said Betty promptly. Then a strange look came into her eyes. "*Really* thirsty," she added hoarsely, licking her lips.

"We'll find water in one of the buildings somewhere," said Markey. "A city this size must have had plenty of water, and the system is bound to be intact somewhere, maybe down in some basement. We'll find it . . ."

"Not in *that* building," said Betty firmly. "I don't want to see that toad again!"

Markey shook his head.

"Know something about toads?"

"Yes. They're warty."

"No, I don't mean that. I mean about their habits."

"This one looked like his were all bad," Betty hazarded.

"They hate sunlight," said Markey. "In fact, they sleep during the heat of the day. They come out only at night. Why should this toad, big as he is, be any different?"

Betty looked doubtful.

"Come on," said Markey. "Let's walk around to the front of this building. Maybe we can see more from there."

HALF reluctantly, Betty followed as he led the way through the dusty street. In a few moments they reached the front of the building and here Betty stopped dead in her tracks.

"Oh!"

"What's the matter?" asked Markey, startled by her stifled scream.

"Over there," gasped Betty. "Somebody . . ."

Markey whirled, and his eyes widened as he saw a white form lying in the sand just before the main entrance to the huge building of the toad.

"It's . . . it's . . ." he struggled hoarsely with the words ". . . one of . . . your duplicates!"

Betty clutched his arm.

"Is she . . . dead?"

Markey began walking swiftly forward.

"If she isn't, she soon will be lying in this sun without any clothes on!"

He reached the nude body and knelt beside it. Betty came up fearfully, stared down at the replica of herself.

"Oh," said Betty with a surge of pity. "She's sunburned . . . horribly!"

"She's still alive," said Markey, wonderment in his tone. "Breathing naturally, just as though she were asleep. By golly, I think she *is* asleep!"

"We've got to get her out of this sun . . . no matter what she is," decided Betty. "Here, carry her into the door-

way; it's shady there."

Markey lifted the girl in his arms, and as he looked down into the relaxed, but terribly sunburned face, a chill of supernatural terror surged through him. This just couldn't be—and yet it was. By all rights, this sleeping girl should be in terrible agony. A burn like this might easily prove fatal.

Betty was stripping off her lab smock now, spreading it out on a heap of soft sand. Markey laid the sleeping girl on it. Then he straightened up, looked helplessly around.

"What she needs is hospital care," he began. Then he stopped speaking abruptly. Betty's eyes followed his wide ones, and hers grew amazed too. Lying in peaceful slumber farther inside the doorway lay another nude feminine form.

"Another one!" she gasped.

"Jumping sassafras!" exclaimed Markey. "They're sleeping all over the place. Look, there's one of me!"

It was true. A half-dozen limp forms lay about, in various attitudes of repose. And no effort of Markey's could awaken them.

Prodded by curiosity, the two wondering humans made their way into the building, came to the vast hall with its carven walls and its black marble floor. The throne on which the giant toad had been crouched was empty. And lying at its base were several more of the nude and almost-nude duplicates of Markey and Betty.

"Where's the toad?" whispered Betty.

"If I don't miss my guess," hazarded Markey, "it's asleep, just like all these duplicates of you and me. In fact, I'm getting some sort of theory which may or may not fit the occasion—explain why these duplicates are sleeping, and why they can't be awakened."

"What's that?"

"Remember you told me they just sort of materialized out of a cloud of vapor?"

"Yes?"

"Well, I think that toad did that. It looked us over, perhaps with more than just its eyes, and then proceeded to form living duplicates, similar in every detail, with some strange power of atomic reproduction that is beyond our understanding. I guess the closest you could come to it with anything we know, would be the protoplasm of spiritualistic mediums."

"But why are *they* sleeping?" asked Betty.

"I've got a theory about that, too. In fact, I have a hunch that they don't really exist, in a sense, except in the mind of the toad. So, being just a part, or an extension, of itself, they sleep when it sleeps—which means that right now it is somewhere in the building, and helpless as a toad!"

MARKEY made his way toward the empty throne. The dark area behind it was empty now, no bright-colored crystals gyrating in the air. Markey stepped over the couch, found himself in a dark chamber. Betty followed, clutching his arm with fingers that trembled.

"Let's not go any further," she begged. "I . . . maybe you're wrong about it being asleep."

Something tinkled beneath Markey's feet, and he stooped and picked up one of the crystals. There were more, in a huge pile in the darkness, and Markey selected several, carried them out into the light. There he looked at them closely, and his eyes began to grow wider in comprehension. Finally he uttered a low exclamation of jubilance.

"Bets!"

"What is it?"

"These crystals. Look at them! What do they remind you of?"

"Why, nothing," said Betty hesitantly. "Well, yes, they do. They look something like the crystals of that stuff we make in the lab, greatly enlarged. Like they appeared under the microscope."

"*Something* like?" asked Markey. "They *are* like! Listen, Betty, these crystals are just what I've been dreaming of! Remember how I wished the chemistry department would discover a way of precipitating these crystals in larger size, so we wouldn't have to make so many of them, and mould them into the proper form?"

"Yes, but . . ."

"*These* are the crystals we need! Huge, perfect . . . why we can use them in a million ways! Aircraft instruments, radar, telescopic sights, range-finders, radio, television, Lord knows what else! It would save millions of dollars, and millions upon millions of man hours—Betty, it would shorten the war by a year!"

"Except for one thing," reminded Betty. "There's no war here. Not even the world we knew. We're marooned, in some awful place with two moons, and nothing but ruins. What good will these crystals here do the war effort?"

"Nothing, here," said Markey doggedly. "But something brought us here, and that same something can send us, and the crystals, back. And I intend to find it out."

"What about the toad?"

"I'll kill it, if I can find it."

Betty stared around the great hall fearfully.

"I hope we don't find it," she said.

Markey stuffed the crystals into his pocket.

"I hope we do," he corrected her. "And we're going to start looking right now! Come on."

MARKEY walked to the throne, yanked the satin-like covering off it and saw that it was constructed of ornately carved wood. He wrenched at one end of it, and after much effort, loosened a long piece. A couple of vigorous kicks broke it loose. Markey hefted it in both hands, then grunted in satisfaction.

"Those eyes will make perfect targets for this club! Now, let's go. I've a hunch we'll find it sleeping somewhere in that dark room where the crystals are piled."

"Just a minute," said Betty. "If I've got to go toad-hunting, I'm not going to do it with my bare hands. I hate warts."

She began tugging at a smaller wooden portion of the low throne.

Markey grinned, kicked it loose for her, and she picked it up, swinging it about her head. Markey ducked.

"Take it easy," he said. "I'm no toad!"

He led the way into the dimness of the inner room, peering cautiously ahead. As they advanced, he saw now that the store of crystals here was tremendous. And now and then one of them moved slightly, and a tinkling noise came from it. Once he saw one of them change from a cube to a sixteen-sided figure with a note like a plucked harp-string.

"What makes them do that?" he muttered. "Those crystals are, or should be, as stable as rock."

"Maybe the toad can make them change," suggested Betty. "Maybe it isn't asleep at all—only waiting for us to get near, so it can make a lot of doubles of us and then make them jump on us."

"That would be bad," admitted Markey grimly. "Especially if they all have clubs like this one!"

"What's that?" asked Betty, halting

suddenly. "Over there?"

Markey peered at a dim white form just ahead.

"Looks like the girl I first thought was you!" he exclaimed. "The one with the goblet of that stinking liquid. . . ."

"Stinking liquid?" questioned Betty in a tone of curiosity. "You didn't mention that to me before."

Markey stopped his forward motion, staring down at the still-kneeling, but obviously sleeping girl, the goblet still held in outstretched hands.

"Stinking . . .!" he began to exclaim.

He stooped suddenly and took the golden goblet from the silver tray.

"Betts!"

"What?"

"This stuff! It's almost like the stuff in our lab. The batch that began to stink, and then exploded with that noiseless blast!"

"Set it down!" said Betty in horrified tones. "It'll blow up and no telling *where* it'll send us this time!"

Markey stood thinking deeply, looking down at the goblet.

"Maybe that's what we *want*," he said. "Maybe it *would* send us back to our own world!"

"*Pete!*" screamed Betty. "Look out!"

STARTLED, Markey stood for a second, and as he did so, the sleeping girl at his feet rose to her knees, took the goblet from him, set it carefully back on the silver tray and then crouched down again.

Markey shifted his club to the ready and peered about in the darkness.

"That wasn't any voluntary act of her own," he said tensely. "That toad is somewhere here, it knows we are here, and it's awake!"

Betty stared around too, her face gleaming palely in the gloom. If she was frightened now, no sound escaped her tight lips.

For a long moment they stood silently, listening. Then Markey turned slowly.

"*Listen!*" he said tensely.

"I don't hear anything," said Betty.

"Quiet!"

Out of the darkness a faint slithering sound came, as though something leathery and wet was sliding along a stone floor. Then, distinctly, came the slap of a flat surface against stone.

Hop—hop. Hop—hop. Hop.

"It's coming!" whispered Betty, even her whisper holding a note of hoarse panic.

Markey gripped her arm reassuringly; then advanced slowly in the direction of the sound. Betty stayed behind him. When Markey stopped, she bumped into him. Then she peered around his shoulder.

Blazing in the dark were two giant, unwinking eyes, about shoulder-level.

Markey and Betty stared at them, fascinated. Slowly Markey felt a peculiar lassitude creeping over him. His club began to drop in his hands, descending slowly to a resting position on the floor. His fingers began to relax, almost allowing it to drop away altogether.

Behind him the clatter of Betty's club on the stone jerked his mind away from the miasma of relaxation that was numbing it. Betty brushed past him, walking as though hypnotized, straight toward the toad.

With a savage yell, Markey leaped past her, clutching his heavy club aloft. With all his strength brought it down on one of the eyes. It winked out in the darkness, and something wet splattered over Markey. Behind him Betty screamed piercingly.

With a leap, the toad was on him, and

Markey was borne to the floor beneath its massive weight. But the toad had leaped involuntarily in its agony, and Markey was free of its main weight. It leaped convulsively once again, and Markey scrambled to his feet.

BETTY was facing the toad, her club swinging down. It thudded harmlessly against the flank of the monster, dropped from her numbed fingers. Betty turned and ran a short distance away, stood with her palms to her cheeks in terror as she waited for the onslaught of the toad.

But it didn't come. Instead the monster faced her, its one eye glaring wildly. All around faint, misty columns of whitish substance were forming, and Markey saw dozens of duplicates of Betty beginning to take form. He rushed forward, desperate, in an attempt to reach that remaining eye and smash it. But he was too late. A soft feminine body crashed into his, wrapped strong arms around him. Another female form rushed at him, and a bare arm wrenched his club from his grasp.

More of them were coming now. Markey lashed out desperately at the girl who held him. A right to the chin staggered her, and she collapsed on the floor. But her face was expressionless, showed no pain. She began to clamber back to her feet.

In an instant Markey was the center of a melee of soft bodies, hurling themselves at him. He applied every energy he had to beating them off. He picked up one girl, threw her headlong at three more rushing him. All went to the floor in a heap. Another came at him and he shot a tremendous left jab at her face. She went down and stayed down. Another leaped on Markey's back, and soft arms began to strangle him.

Desperately Markey tore at the devilishly soft, but devilishly strong arms, and in spite of himself, felt a surge of horror as an arm bone snapped beneath his desperate grip. The girl uttered no sound, however, as Markey hurled her away from him.

Free for an instant, he saw Betty, distinguished from the rest of the battling duplicates by reason of her clothing, wrestling desperately with two assailants. One of them she hurled over her head with a neat motion, and the second she sat heavily on the floor by pushing her palm straight into the girl's face.

But now dozens more white shapes were forming. Markey started for the toad, but saw he would never make it. The white forms shaping now were duplicates of himself, and all had clubs. This was the end!

Markey's sagging pocket, with the giant crystals in it, offered its message of his only weapon. He tore the largest one from his pocket, took careful aim, and threw it as though he were pitching a strike across home plate. It went straight and true, hit the remaining eye of the toad. It winked out, and in its place was a ghastly oozing mess.

A rushing white form bore down on Markey, club uplifted. There was no chance to duck. But as Markey cringed beneath the expected blow, the white form grew misty, vanished into nothingness.

But all about, a brilliant white light was growing, and the same soundless explosion was beating against Markey's body. Just as in the laboratory, he pitched to the floor into unconsciousness.

* * *

ALMOST instantly, it seemed, he recovered, found himself sitting on the floor of the laboratory. Behind him the explosion-proof door was shaking beneath mighty blows from the outside,

and the lock was giving. Out there, someone was swinging a heavy sledge.

Beside him, Betty knelt on her knees, staring in fascination and horror at something directly before them both. Markey looked too.

"Jumping sassafras!" he breathed. "The girl with the goblet!"

Kneeling on the floor in that same suppliant position was the nude duplicate of Betty Goodman, the silver platter extended, and on it, the golden goblet with the evil-smelling liquid. But even as they watched, the white figure began to grow tenuous, and the goblet teetered.

Markey leaped to his feet, raced forward, caught the goblet just as the duplicate girl vanished. The silver tray clattered to the floor, and Markey almost spilled the goblet as he halted his headlong rush.

Behind him the explosion-door crashed inward, and several men rushed through.

"Pete!" yelled one of them. "For crying out loud, are you all right? What in hell has been going on in here? This door slammed shut a half-hour ago, and we've been battering it in."

Pete Markey held out the goblet.

"Take good care of this, Carter," he said. "It's . . . something new Bets and I cooked up. We figured it might be dangerous, so we tried it with the door closed. We think, that if you analyze it, you'll find we can precipitate crystals like . . ." Markey dug in his pocket and thrust several of them out at the astonished chemist ". . . these. Save millions of man-hours and can be used in hundreds of ways. I think maybe you'll find you can get the main ingredient to precipitate them from common . . . toads."

"Toads!" gasped Carter. "My God!" He snatched a crystal, examined it and his eyes flashed. "Holy smoke!" he howled. "This is *it!* Pete, you've got something here!" He looked up, stared at Markey and Betty.

"Say, you two!" he exclaimed. "Where in hell did you get so sunburned? Boy, you'll both peel like birch bark! Better get down to first-aid."

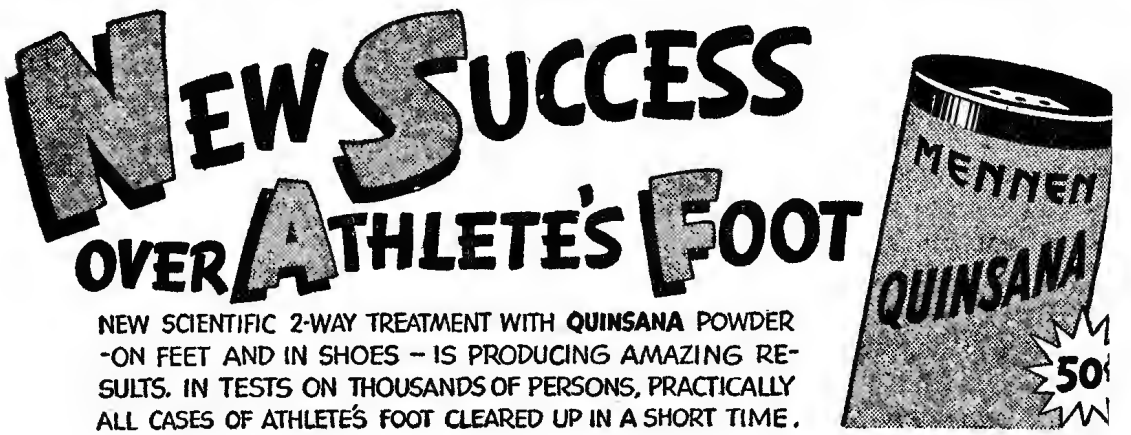
Bearing the golden goblet of liquid, Carter turned and began walking out. As he did so, he became aware of the nature of the goblet, and his steps faltered to a halt. He turned back.

"Holy smoke!" he exclaimed. "Where . . . ?"

He stopped, stood for a moment, then shrugged, turned.

"Ask you later . . ." he mumbled. "No use wasting my breath with *that* going on. . . ."

He held the goblet far out ahead of him, held his nose between forefinger and thumb and walked out.



★ MYSTERIES OF THE BODY ★

ALTHOUGH many people are unaware of the fact, many of our daily ways of thinking and living are largely determined by and dependent upon certain, peculiar glands which are located in various parts of the human body. These glands, which are in a class of their own, are known as ductless or endocrine glands and consist of the thyroid, pancreas, adrenals, pituitary, and several others. They secrete various juices, called hormones, which act upon and excite other parts of the body. Incidentally, the word hormone itself is derived from the Greek "hormao" which means to excite or arouse. As yet all the functions and ramifications of these internal secretions are not fully known.

However, to illustrate the significance of one of these hormones, the following case is cited: A Dr. Murray, in 1891, attended a woman patient, 42 years of age, who had been attacked a while back by an insidious disease which caused a gradual swelling and thickening of her hands and face, lethargy of her speech and walk, extreme sensitiveness to cold, and the inability to take care of herself. After considerable analysis, Dr. Murray decided to treat the patient with hormones extracted from the thyroid gland of a freshly killed sheep. The results achieved were miraculous: the skin, lustrous and dry, the features, swollen and grotesque, were changed back to normal; she no longer suffered from cold weather; nor did she require help in getting about. Of course, continued administration of thyroid extract was imperative and, under such medication, she lived an enjoyable life until the ripe age of 74. This case is a perfect example of how important the hormones are in promoting an evenly-balanced life. Without the aid of hormones, the woman, would have led a rather drab life.

The ductless glands are useful in many other ways. In acute attacks of asthma, an injection of a few drops of adrenalin, the hormone secreted by the adrenal gland, will invariably relieve the suffering. In some cases of heart failure, even a few minutes after the heart has ceased fuctioning ,an injection of adrenalin directly into the heart muscles has restored the beat to the heart. Also, until recently, Addison's disease was considered incurable; but a newly-discovered secretion of the adrenal gland renders the disease responsive to treatment and cure. The thyroid is the most delicate and important of the ductless glands. Its hormone allows the body to respond to normal physical and mental stimuli. When the thyroid is underactive during childhood, dwafism usually occurs. If the deficiency is recognized early enough, and then a regular dose of thyroid hormone is given to the patient, the results are nothing short of a miracle: the afflicted person will change from a freak to a normal human being. In fact, many pronounced cases of physical and mental degeneration have been brought back to normality through the injection of hormones.

Although only the somewhat extreme cases have been cited, the ductless glands affect very decidedly our many personal actions and behavior. Many medical men say that the hormones determine whether a person is bold or bashful, smart or dumb, restless or quiet, fast or slow, and so forth. However, science has not yet uncovered all the secrets of these quite mysterious glands. The use of hormones can, and in the future will, aid people in overcoming minor obstacles which prevent many individuals from enjoying life. This latter use of hormones is increasing as knowledge of the ductless glands increases and the human race has a great deal to look forward to in this field of science.

For the sake of comparison, it is interesting to note that this relatively new method of treating defects and diseases is a far cry from the day when Celsus, a famous Roman physician, recommended wolves' livers for diseases of the liver, the brains of a hare for nervous disorders, and so forth. Yes, the human race has certainly made progress!

★ ANIMAL AIR RAID SHELTERS ★

TODAY man is building air raid shelters in his back yard as a protection from his enemy in case of an air raid, but the animals have been using shelters in the ground as a hideout from attacks by birds for centuries.

The meadow mice provide the hawk with a tasty morsel and so they spend as much time as possible in their grassy runways where the hawk cannot reach them. Because of their enemies from above, the pocket gophers very seldom leave their subterranean tunnels.

Another animal, not very familiar to us, is the hoary marmots or whistlers who build shelters as protection against eagles that most nearly resemble man's air raid shelter. They are one of the handsomest rodents in North America possessing a mixed white and black fur that is very silky. They live principally in the mountains of the West from northern Washington and Montana to Alaska.

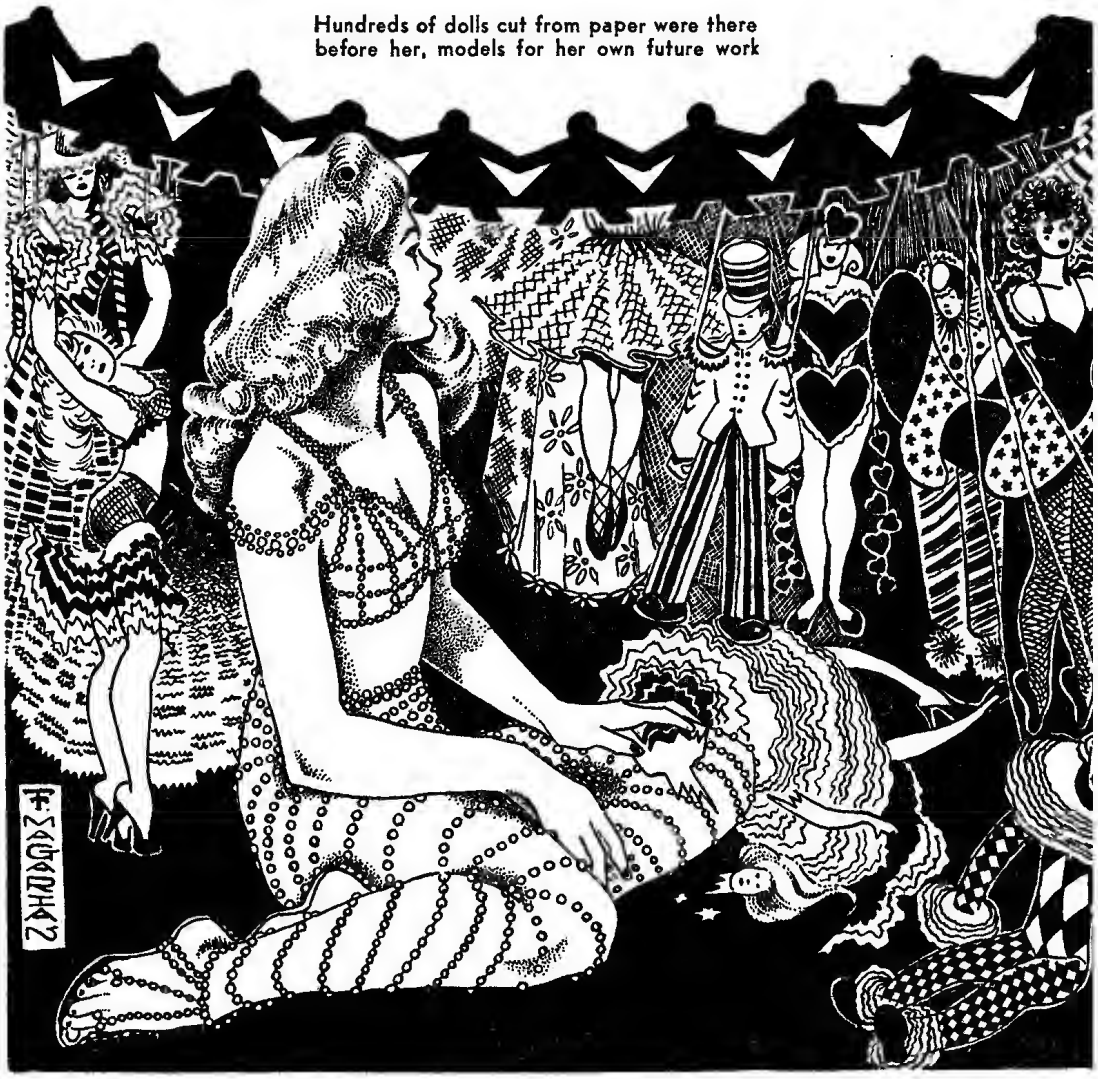
The hoary marmot usually builds his shelter beneath large rocks and boulders or else in rock slides. The holes are dug very deep beneath the rock, for the grizzly bear also seeks out the marmot for food but cannot get to them if they are in their shelter.

World of the PAPER DOLLS

By DON WILCOX

THE stranger with the purple handbills came all the way up the Rocky Hill Drive to toss one of his announcements on Yolanda Lavelle's front doorstep.

Yolanda ran to the door, but waited until the handbill man's back was turned before she stepped out to pick up the paper. She waited because her hands were full of paper dolls and scissors; and grown-ups might laugh to see a seventeen year old girl playing with



Hundreds of dolls cut from paper were there before her, models for her own future work

There was magic in his fingers;
magic that made paper dolls live



She passed the test of cutting paper dolls, and the life that came to them peopled an amazing world

things suitable for children only.

The handbill read:

"TOLOZELL, THE SIAMESE HYPNOTIST. TONIGHT! Main Street theater. Price 50 cents."

Yolanda studied the purple picture.

"Tolozell—he's ugly!" she thought. "He's repulsive. All that black hair around his face makes him look like an evil old goat with indigestion. And those sullen, half-closed eyes — ugh! I'd never make a paper doll from him! . . . But he comes from Siam. And he's a hypnotist! . . . I wonder what it feels like to be a hypnotist. I wish I could hypnotize my paper dolls."

Yolanda ran through the castle-like mansion to show the handbill to Jolly John How, the little old bald-headed Chinese cook.

Jolly John, in spite of being very shy and very mysterious, was the best friend Yolanda ever had.

She found Jolly John at the rear porch rail looking down at the driveway. His manner was unusually nervous, and his arms jerked within the sleeves of his starchy white jacket when she showed him the handbill.

"I saw handbill man coming," John How said, trying not to appear surprised. "Saw picture already. Always jump when I see ugly picture. Waiting for man to come back."

"Why?" Yolanda asked.

"To test him."

"Are you suspicious of handbill men?"

"Sluspicious when they carry handbills of sluspicious faces."

Yolanda's curiosity was aroused more than ever when she saw that Jolly John had got his *White Paper Wand.* This "wand," which appeared to be a short cane made of sections of tightly rolled white paper, was the one possession which John How guarded and treasured above anything.

NOW he was unwrapping a strip of the gleaming white paper from one end of it. In appearance the wand remained unchanged.

"Scissors?" Yolanda volunteered.

He tore off a six-inch sheet, set the *White Paper Wand* aside, and took the scissors. They flashed in his clever hands, scraps of paper fell to the porch floor, a simple little paper doll took form within his fingers.

"To test this man," said John How in an undertone, "to see if him trustworthy."

He gave the gleaming paper doll a flip over the porch rail. It floated down to the driveway.

The handbill man came along presently, trudging back toward town. The gleaming white paper doll caught his eye. With an attitude of curiosity he bent to pick it up.

At his touch it exploded in his hands.

From the porch rail Yolanda saw it happen. Jolly John jerked her back so that she would not be noticed, though she could still see the handbill man. But she saw the flash of yellow fire, the wisp of brown smoke. In that flash the little white paper doll was gone.

"Fire not hurt him," John How whispered. "Only ploove him not trustworthy. Must remember. Tall man. Blond hair. Much muscle . . ."

Yolanda found herself less concerned with Jolly John's description than with the handbill man's frightened, puzzled manner. He rubbed his hands and looked about with an injured expression as if wondering why he'd been made the victim of some chemist's prank. Then he shrugged and strode on briskly toward town.

Yolanda wanted to go to the show.

Of all the persons who lived in Yolanda's castle-like mansion on Rocky Hill Drive — mostly crabbed relatives and sleepy servants—only John How,

the Chinese cook, took any interest in her.

She begged him to take her.

"If handbill man not trustworthy," said Jolly John, "how untrustworthy must Siamese hypnotist be."

"You're funny, Jolly John," Yolanda retorted. "Anyone who touches your magic papers would make them explode."

John How shook his head. He marched her back to the rear porch and had her pick up the scraps that had fallen to the floor.

Her fingers touched them hesitantly. There was no flash of fire. She simply gathered them up and dropped them in the wastebasket.

"See, you trustworthy," Jolly John smiled. "Now, if you want to go to show, I take you. If you wise, you stay, I give you show right here."

And so it happened that Yolanda spent the afternoon listening to John How's story, and failed to hear the ring of the telephone when her friend Katherine Knight tried to call her to make a date for the hypnotist's show.

CHAPTER II

The Tragedy of the Chiams

IN HIS broken way, Jolly John How did his best to lead Yolanda into an appreciation of the weird and bloody history of his people, whom he called the *Chiams*.

"All through second world war, I live in cave to watch treasure," said John, and the jolly lines of his withered brown face grew deep with pain. "I shoot people."

"You—?"

"I guard the cave. Toward last of war I hear much digging. Think treasure sure gone now. At last a hole appear in wall, big enough for arm to reach through. Then hand appear. Start to grab jewels. I shoot. Hand jerk back, then start to come again. I shoot again. Wait awhile. Many hours it come. Always I shoot close to fingers. Always hand give quick jerk. Finally go away."

"Was it a very valuable treasury, like a bank?"

"Like all the banks."

The *Chiams,* Jolly John went on, had been bound together for hundreds of years by the existence of that treasury of gems and precious metals. They had built it up by industry and thrift, each adding to it when his fortunes permitted.

But the joy of every year was the Chiam Day, when every one of the thousands of Chiams would come to the society's headquarters, each to draw his annual prize from the treasury.

"Would you draw a prize?" Yolanda asked.

"Every year. Once got fine lump yellow gold. Once, ruby. Many fine prizes. Everybody same. Everybody happy."

"What did you do with all your prizes?"

"When war come, all my jewels and gold taken by Japs. Now war all gone, many years gone. But happiness has not come back."

The Chiams, he explained, were struggling valiantly year after year to reorganize, and to recapture their old customs. But there were lots of troubles. Jap Imperialists were still trying to spread anarchy among the Chiams. Many people believed that the joys of Chiam Day would never come back.

"Why not?"

"Because treasure is still hidden."

"Then the Japs didn't get it?"

"No. Almost, not quite. But still trying."

"And it's still hidden in that cave

where you kept the hand jerking back?"

Jolly John smiled faintly. "No . . . no . . . Not there any more. Maybe no one know where . . . No one but my White Paper Wand."

"Your Wand!"

"Maybe it know."

"You mean that *you* know?"

"Maybe I come to America so I *don't* know." John How leaned back in his chair. His almond eyes roved across the Chinese decorations along the walls. "Only the White Paper Wand—"

"But you came over to take care of me. I remember. I was only seven when my parents died. And my father's best friend, Harrison O'Connor, was supposed to take care of me. But he was tied up with business matters in the Orient. And I was to stay here. So Harrison O'Connor brought you over—he and his son—and a few weeks later they went back and left you here."

"Your memory very good," said John How.

"I remember it all because right away you taught me to make paper dolls and helped me make one of each person—yourself, and Mr. O'Connor, and his son—"

"You still have?"

"I have the one of you. Would you like to see it?"

SHE ran to her room and returned with an old suitcase. She knew exactly where to look, among the pack of cut-out dolls, to find the old battered paper representation of John How.

"And Mr. O'Connor?" Jolly John asked.

"I buried it after he died. Out in the garden."

"And the son—Carter O'Connor?"

Yolanda reflected. "I lent it to Katherine Knight and she lost it. That was ten years ago. Carter O'Connor was thirteen and we were only seven, but we both had fallen in love with him and quarreled about him. And finally I lent her the paper doll of him to make peace."

Yolanda laughed as these childish memories came back to her. But John How smiled dreamily. Perhaps his thoughts were thousands of miles away.

She guessed that he may have come to America, not only to take care of her, but also to escape political dangers that threatened him in the land of the Chiams.

She inquired on this point, and John How unfolded a fuller story of the underground activities along the Mandarin road. The Japanese Imperialists were carrying on their treacherous propaganda, trying to seize an economic stranglehold on the Chiams.

"But time will soon be ripe," Jolly John said, "when White Paper Wand will return to find treasure, and treasure will unite people."

"How soon will it be safe?"

"When times are safe for honesty, times are safe for Chiams. From hundreds of years all Chiams are most honest."

All of this news left Yolanda fairly breathless. How strange that this quaint little old cook, the same Jolly John who had watched her cut out paper dolls for the past ten years, could be carrying such mighty secrets.

Amusing, thought Yolanda, that he should give the White Paper Wand credit for bearing the secret. But if he preferred to talk in symbols she would do the same.

"Aren't you afraid the Wand will give away the secret?"

"It would flash fire before it would yield to hands of untrustworthy."

"Or might it not forget where it left

this priceless treasure?"

"Does homing pigeon forget where to fly?" John How asked.

"These wrappings of paper are wings of white pigeons."

"All right," Yolanda laughed, thinking that the little old Chinese was making a game of mystifying her. "The paper wrappings are white pigeons and the pointed silver knob is a skyrocket. When the time comes I suppose such a Wand will shoot away and fly to the other side of the ocean."

"When the time comes—"

AN UNGENTLE call from another room broke in upon their confidential talk. It was an aunt, one of the elderly relatives who had moved into the Rocky Hill mansion after the death of Yolanda's parents.

"Yolanda! Where on earth are you? Come answer the telephone, for heaven's sake. Your friend Katherine's been trying all afternoon—"

Yolanda hurriedly gathered up her suitcase of cut-out dolls. *In her haste she tore the head of the Jolly John doll.*

"Yolanda, are you coming or aren't you!" the voice screeched impatiently.

"Coming," Yolanda called. Her eyes lifted to meet the gentle smile of Jolly John. "I'm so sorry. What made me do that?"

"Never mind a little tear," said Jolly John. "Old doll like old man, not much good any more."

She shook her head slowly, denying his words. "After what you've told me this afternoon, I knew that this doll is the most wonderful of all."

"Thank you."

"And if I can ever help you—you and your Chiams—in any way—"

"Thanks some more. Now you must answer telephone."

Katherine Knight's call was to learn whether Yolanda was going to the hypnotism show, as Katherine wanted to go with someone.

Yolanda couldn't think of going, now. But she couldn't tell Katherine why, for fear of betraying John How's confidences. She found herself in an awkward position as the telephone conversation proceeded. Katherine, usually unaggressive, was all eagerness to see the show.

Yes, Yolanda would admit that she wanted to see it, too, even though she was afraid. . . . Afraid of what? Nothing in particular, except that she just didn't trust hypnotists—that is, Siamese hypnotists. Anyway she wouldn't go unless Jolly John would go along, and she knew he wouldn't—

"No, I don't want to urge him. I'm sure he'd rather not. Please don't coax. Well—just a moment."

Yolanda turned from the telephone to Jolly John.

The little old Chinese nodded. "All right. Cannot reslist two charming girls. Will go."

CHAPTER III

The Charms of Tolozell

AT EIGHT-THIRTY that evening Yolanda and her friend Katherine followed the little old Chinese down the aisle to a side seat near the front. The theater was crowded and full of the noise of chattering childen and raucous youth. Among the latter there was a decided air of skepticism. These older boys and girls were assuring themselves that whatever might happen in this mysterious game of hypnotism, it was probably all done with mirrors, or similar trickery.

"He won't hypnotize me," one pudgy red-haired lad blustered. "If he tries to get me up on the stage, I'll hypnotize him."

These boasts stoutened the hearts of the most timid; and Yolanda wondered if even the grown-ups might not be whispering similar defenses among themselves.

As for Yolanda and Katherine, the old Chinese had solemnly warned both of them not to allow themselves to be used as subjects.

"Maybe this Tolozell someone I once knew, long time ago," he had said.

"Are you from Siam?" Katherine asked.

"Once lived along Old Mandarin Road, between Siam and China. Many people pass. Maybe one of them this Tolozell."

Now the footlights blazed on, the crowd silenced into breathlessness, the curtain rose and the show was under way.

Down from either side of a throne at the rear center of the stage came two husky young men who were obviously attendants. They were not prepossessing as to appearance, and they were dressed in gray street clothes and made up in a colorless fashion as if to attract as little attention as possible. If they were not American, at least they had none of the exotic look of a Siamese hypnotist. They took their stations near the wings, bowed, and became statues. Yolanda decided that one of them was the big blonde handbill man.

All eyes focused on the figure who sat in the center of the throne: Tolozell himself.

The throne did much to build him into a figure of power and brilliance. It was heavy with lush black velvet draperies, which swept upward from the floor toward some mysterious elevation back of the floodlights. The inner draperies were dull yellow velvet, and Tolozell's hulking form stood out from this lighted background like a purple monument.

DEEP, mysterious, breath-taking purple—it dominated the whole stage. It shone from his jeweled headband, his flowing robe, the sharply creased trousers with the gold stripes on the sides, even his shoes.

Yolanda thought his black, black hair was tinged with purple, too. The glistening locks hung to his shoulders and draped his cheeks and chin to inclose his coppery yellow face.

It was an ugly face. Yolanda was studying the sullen eyes, the brutal, twisted mouth, when John How whispered to her.

"Lookee, his left hand. I know this Tolozell. He is half Siamese, half Japanese. Many times came through gates of China, down Mandarin Road, with hypnotism exhibition. I know his hand."

"Maybe he knows you, too," Katherine Knight suggested.

Yolanda couldn't see anything peculiar about the left hand at first. It was just the sort of square, solid looking hand one would expect of a man of such bulk and apparent strength. But soon she realized that he had a tic—a nervous clutching of the left hand, which repeated two or three times every minute.

The hypnotist rose from his throne and slowly descended the steps to the carpeted stage floor. The people hushed until they could hear the quiet swish of his purple shoes. His eyelids half lowered, seemed to be looking at the whole audience at once, gathering everyone into their spell. Onlookers began to scrunch down in their seats as if to get out of sight.

He came to the front of the stage, stopped, bowed ever so slightly, and said, in perfect English, "Ladies and gentlemen . . . How do you do."

It was a low voice, meant to sound as friendly as possible. It brought an

audible response from the audience, a collective sigh and murmur that spelled the easing of tension.

From that moment on the Siamese hypnotist had the house in the palm of his hands. He began talking casually, telling how his bus had come over various highways, most of them excellent, though there had been a detour in an adjoining state. He drew three or four maps from his pocket. Talking on, he opened the maps, and one of them slipped down over the footlights.

An accommodating boy from the front row recovered it and handed it up to him. Tolozell rewarded the little fellow with some pieces of candy.

Within five minutes Tolozell had six boys on the stage ready to be told what to do.

THE little old Chinese cook at Yolanda's side whispered, "Velly clever fellow. Maybe soon he will have clandy for me."

"But you wouldn't go up on the stage, would you?" Yolanda whispered.

"Never can tell. Sometimes get strange impulses when in excited crowd."

With frequent hints from Jolly John How, Yolanda and Katherine tried to understand all that followed. Luckily the little old Chinese had known a little of the hypnotist's art in times past.

Yolanda knew that Jolly John always talked in understatement; and she soon gathered that he had had some mysterious contact with this very Tolozell before. When, where, or how, she could not be sure. But the twitch of that left hand brought back John How's vivid story of guarding the Chiam treasure.

"I hope he doesn't see you," Yolanda whispered.

"Most clever hypnotist not come for nothing," said John How.

The six boys were quick to fall under the hypnotist's spell, which was scarcely a spell at all, it came over them so simply.

The attendants brought chairs for all of them and they grinned and swaggered like young princes at the elegant treatment. Each boy promised that he would help the hypnotist, gladly carrying out any orders; and with that promise the foundation for the hypnotic demonstration was safely laid.

The boys were told to relax in their chairs, and with the repeated words, "Relax, relax, reeelax," the low humming voice of Tolozell became an invitation to sleep.

The Siamese hypnotist took plenty of time, r e p e a t i n g the call, "Sleeeeep, sleeeeep, sleeeeep."

The boys began to nod.

Suddenly the hypnotist changed his manner. In a sharp voice he said, "*Try* to sleep.* Keep *trying*. You can't do

* Successful hypnotism is said to be dependent upon a previously established attitude of cooperation on the part of the subject. Persons are not often hypnotized against their will. To the observer, the strangeness of the phenomenon lies in the extremes to which the person under hypnosis is willing to go to satisfy the suggestions of the performer. His behavior may appear highly absurd and irrational. But it is not unrelated to the normal behavior of daily life. For example, if a person is exerting all his conscious effort to hear every word of a newscast, and at the same time a friend asks him to sign a letter and places a pen in his hand, he is likely to accept the suggestion and perform the act automatically, remaining intent upon the newscast. In hypnotism, the friendship and willingness to cooperate must first be established. Next, the hypnotist will probably put his subject in a state of semi-sleepiness; for it has been found that a person is most suggestible when experiencing the "hypnogogic hallucinations"—that is, when the pictures are passing more or less vividly through his mind, just previous to his entering the real sleep. If, at such a time, the hynotist commands, *"Try* to sleep," the subject's conscious energies go into the *trying;* so energetically does he *try* that he thwarts his natural passage into sleep. But while the subject's conscious efforts are centered on this deadlock, the hypnotist proceeds with his suggestions, which are responded to more or less automatically.—Author.

it, because you promised to obey me. But try, try, *try!*"

WITH this change of manner Tolozell apparently succeeded in putting the boys in the proper frame of mind to accept suggestions. For a moment later they were answering his beck and call.

"Up here, please, young man. Your name? . . . Never mind, I'll call you Bill. From now on your name is Bill, see? Now tell me, Bill, what's your name?"

"Bill."

"That's right. Bill, do you see this calendar?"

Tolozell pointed to thin air, but the boy nodded as if he saw something.

"All right, Bill, you'd better get busy and tear the sheets off that calendar until you come to the present month."

Bill went to work tearing off invisible sheets. Another lad, who had been named Tom, helped pick them up off the floor and pile them together; a third boy lighted them with invisible matches; and a fourth warmed his hands over the fire that wasn't there.

While Tolozell and the boys carried on, the attendants came down into the crowd and accepted a few more volunteers to help with the performance. Four young men stepped up, and Tolozell promptly hypnotized them and told them they were e x c e l l e n t baseball players.

A baseball was tossed to them; at any rate they appeared to believe it was a baseball, though the audience knew it was only imagination. Soon the four young men agreed upon captains for a team; the captains chose their teams from the other boys on the stage and the whole ten of them went into their game.

To the amazement of the crowd, the game spread right out into the audience. It was hilarious fun for everyone, the more so because none of the players seemed to be in the least aware of the presence of a crowd. They pegged the invisible ball from one corner of the theater to the other, and struck flies right over the heads of the crowd. Their actions were so genuine that here and there some of the spectators would duck to keep from getting hit.

Then e v e r y o n e would roar with laughter; for it was plain that the whole house had been more or less drawn into accepting the hypnotist's absurd suggestions.

Sillier goings-on soon followed. The players were called back to the stage to eat their lunch. There was no food, Tolozell, said, except a stack of old boards. But they were sweet flavored boards with only a few nails in them.

The boys ate them with great gusto, not forgetting to stop to yank imaginary nails out of their teeth.

Later, when most of them had been snapped out of the hypnotic spell and sent back to their seats, there remained a husky young man who agreed to have a rock placed on his stomach and broken by a sledge hammer.

Under hypnosis he was told to become perfectly rigid.

"After this is all over," said Tolozell to his husky subject, "you'll say you feel you've got a great burden off your chest." *

PERFECTLY rigid, the subject was lifted by the attendants, and placed with his head and shoulders on one chair, his feet on another.

Upon this human bridge the attendants placed a slab of limestone that must have weighed more than a hundred pounds.

* This is the post-hypnotic suggestion, which lingers in the subject's mind to influence him to say or do something after he has come out from under the hypnotic spell.—Author.

Tolozell went back to the throne and picked what appeared to be a fourteen pound maul. He was a dangerous-looking spectacle, thought Yolanda; the tool, hung from his hulking shoulders, had the look of a crude weapon. It was in that moment that Yolanda shuddered at the thought of making a paper doll of Tolozell. Might it not cause her endless trouble? But there was no time to think of paper dolls now.

The maul swung through the air and came down with a solid clunk. The rigid body took the impact without a shudder. The big stone lay broken.

The attendants removed it. They set the rigid man u p r i g h t and Tolozell brought him back to consciousness with a few snaps of the fingers. Great applause greeted the young husky as he returned to his seat. He would be the town's hero for weeks to come.

The hypnotist called to him.

"Do you feel perfectly all right, Mr. Smith?"

"Sure," the husky fellow laughed. "I feel like I've got a great burden off my chest.

The crowd r e m e m b e r e d and applauded again.

Now there was a conspicuous pause while the Siamese hypnotist looked out over the crowd.

"I would like to make friends with all of you before the evening is over. There will only be time, however, for me to talk with a few of you."

He descended the steps from the stage and came down the aisle toward Yolanda and her party.

"How-do-you-do. You are a Chinese, I believe. W o u l d you give me your name?"

"John How."

"Thank you, Mr. How. Ladies and gentlemen, we have here a man whose ancestors lived in my own part of the world, the great Orient. Would you like for him to come up—"

A solid a p p l a u s e proved that the whole crowd was ready to back up Tolozell's suggestion. Even Yolanda found herself quavering. It did seem so harmless.

"Come, Mr. How. The people are asking for you."

"Must have few minutes," said the Chinese s m i l i n g uncomfortably, "to think over."

TOLOZELL relayed the words to the audience, and there was the slightest hint of mockery in his tone. "Very well, I shall give my Oriental friend a few minutes to make up his mind on this weighty matter. But I warn you, I can't work with people who like to be stubborn. In the meantime—"

Tolozell reached to take Yolanda by the hand.

"In the meantime, let us have a merry little dance, if one of these young ladies will be so kind. You know, ladies and gentlemen, I always say it takes ten men to keep an audience entertained—but only one pretty girl. Come, Miss."

Yolanda's heart was pounding. She was trying hard not to betray her fear; her instinctive distrust of this hulking creature was tremendous. Her eyes refused to meet his cunning gaze. What designs did he have?

"If I come," she said tremulously, "I come of my own free will."

Her words were swallowed up by the noisy mumblings of the audience. But the hypnotist repeated them for everybody's benefit.

"If the young lady comes up to the stage," the voice mocked, "she wants it known that she comes of her own free will—"

"But you don't believe me," Yolanda cut in, and everyone, including Yolanda herself, was surprised at the strength of her defiance. "You would believe

that it was *your* will, not mine—and so—"

"I'll go. I'll dance."

It was Katherine who startled everyone by suddenly volunteering. Before Yolanda or John How could stop her, she was marching up to the stage.

CHAPTER IV

A Slip of the Hammer

TOLOZELL'S half-closed eyes lingered on Yolanda with a look that might have been disappointment, or anger, or even lust. Obviously he hadn't intended to let her off so easy. But he had boasted that *one* girl could entertain as well as ten men. So he couldn't ask for more.

He turned and trudged back to the stage, and extended to Katherine a gracious welcome.

Through the demonstrations that followed, Yolanda suffered untold agonies. If she had gone up herself, the ordeal could have been no more difficult. For Katherine Knight was her very best pal. And Katherine had done this thing only to save her.

"For me," Yolanda kept whispering to herself. "Because I was stubborn—"

Yolanda trembled as she watched. already the bright-eyed little friend had succumbed to the spell of hypnosis. Now she was dancing—whirling—leaping—all to imaginary music.

Katherine could dance!

Yolanda hadn't known it before. No one had known it. This was a surprising thing. Katherine was thought to be a timid girl, even more reserved than Yolanda. People thought of her as a quick, eager, wide-eyed child, always ready to act on the suggestions of others, but not possessing much initiative of her own.

Yolanda couldn't understand it. She herself was the larger, the older, the more aggressive, the stronger. And yet here she sat, as if choked with repressions and angry suspicions, while her little dark-haired friend took possession of the stage and brought down the house.

So it had taken Tolozell, the Siamese Hypnotist, to discover what no one else knew—that this t i m i d little brunette had a hidden talent!

Was that good or bad? Again Yolanda found herself clutching her hands like a terrified child. Perhaps Katherine wasn't *able* to do these things in her normal behavior. Perhaps this unaccountable exhibition would be attended by something disastrous!

Katherine Knight gave a deep curtsy and dropped gracefully to the floor, her wide skirt flouncing about her. She seemed completely unconscious of the applause.

The hypnotist was reassuring the crowd that there would be an encore, when something changed his plans—John How.

Tolozell quickly brought Katherine back to consciousness, and seated her, like a guest of honor, at one side of the stage. Then he extended a wave of welcome to the little old Chinese cook, who was hobbling slowly up the aisle toward the stage.

JUST when it was that Katherine Knight slipped quietly down from the stage, Yolanda did not know. For the Siamese Hypnotist was a master at directing everyone's attention, and now he directed it, with the aid of an accommodating spotlight, upon the comic little figure of John How.

On reaching the stage, Jolly John adjusted his collar as anyone might in a moment of embarrassment. A gleaming white paper doll fell from inside his coat and dropped to the floor.

Yolanda had guessed that he was carrying a paper doll made from the wand. Now she knew that for a second time John How was placing implicit faith in some mysterious Chinese magic to direct him.

Apparently he did not catch sight of the paper doll until it had fallen down against the handle of the fourteen-pound maul, leaning against the throne. He regarded the big sledge hammer with interest.

"Come, my friend," Tolozell called. "Our audience is waiting for whatever we have to offer."

Jolly John nodded. He started to fasten the little white paper doll in his pocket.

"What a bright piece of paper you have there, my friend," Tolozell said. "Come, let's don't keep any secrets from our good audience. Give us a look."

So saying, the hypnotist reached out to take the white paper doll.

In days to come there would be many a loafers'-bench argument over just how Tolozell took it. Some would say he snatched it with a swift pickpocket grab. Some would say he took it in a mannerly fashion—that Jolly John even handed it to him.

But on one point there would be no argument. Every one in the house saw it happen, and for s h e e r mystery it capped everything that had transpired up to that time.

The white paper doll exploded.

At Tolozell's touch it burst into a flash of white fire and was gone.

The hypnotist jumped back with an injured expression. He rubbed his empty fingers together. Evidently he had not been b u r n e d; only shocked. The impulsive laughter of the audience was muffled in startled whispers.

"Well, my friend," Tolozell blustered, trying to recover himself, "I can see that you carry a load of tricks up your sleeve. How interesting. It is strange that I have not met you on the stage before—*or have I?* You should be starring on Broadway, pulling artificial rabbits out of hats."

JOLLY JOHN awkwardly bowed. In his habitual smile Yolanda was sure she detected an unusual expression—perhaps of agony, or desperation, or something stronger.

"Go right ahead, my friend." Tolozell's voice was a cynic rasp. "Give us another of your tricks. The stage is all yours. What will you have?"

John How glanced back at the throne. He answered slowly.

"I take h a m m e r—and rock—and you."

Everyone laughed. Everyone cheered. The hypnotist's bluff had been called. He squirmed, but the little old Chinese held on like a bulldog to his original request.

"You plomise to do what I ask," he said s t u b b o r n l y, "and I velly well hypnotize you."

"Do your worst," Tolozell snapped.

Jolly John went to work. Whether or not he actually hypnotized the Siamese hypnotist the audience couldn't be sure. At any rate Tolozell appeared to pass into sleep. He became so rigid that the attendants were able to bridge him across two chairs. They placed a wide flat stone on his midsection.

John How stood with his hands on his hips, gazing so fixedly at the task which awaited him that the audience might well have wondered whether he himself was hypnotized. In the moment's delay, the attendants apparently were having a bit of private talk at the rear of the stage. One of them retired to the wings. Soon the other, the big blond fellow, came up from the throne carrying the fourteen-pound maul. He handed it to Jolly John.

A moment later both attendants were out of sight and only John How and the rigid Siamese hypnotist were left on the stage.

Some one in front of Yolanda whispered, "What's he up to? He's not aiming for the stone. He's looking right at Tolozell's head!"

Yolanda stifled a scream. An electric shock of terror caught the whole house. *Was that hammer going to strike true?*

John How gave it a backward swing, it flashed upward in a swift arc. Right above his own head *it slipped out of his hands.*

It crashed down. It sliced the little Chinese cook across the side of the skull as it fell. He and the heavy tool thudded to the floor together.

Blood was flowing, and the sight of it brought cries and screams from the spectators. On the instant the attendants rushed onto the stage from the wings. The rigid hypnotist, breaking out of his freeze, rolled the stone off his own body, and as it fell it barely missed striking the already gashed head of John How.

Now he could not be seen, for the attendants and the hypnotist had apparently jumped to the rescue. They were seconds ahead of the first group of men who charged up from the audience.

Yolanda was too nearly paralyzed to move. But her eyes and her ears caught more than the general aspect of terror which gripped the whole house. She overheard the whisper of the sharp-eyed observer in front of her.

"It never slipped out of his hands. It was *jerked,* just as he swung. There was a fine wire. I saw it. One of those damned attendants threw a hitch over that hammer before he gave it to the little fellow. It's murder, as plain as day."

CHAPTER V

Somewhere in Siam

CARTER O'CONNOR re-read the letter once more before blowing out his candle. Any mail from America that found its way to this desolate part of the world deserved to be re-read several times, even though it had been written months ago.

"Is he still readin'?" one of the workers muttered sleepily. "It beats me how he can build road all day and read all night."

"A man can't live for buildin' highways and nothin' else," someone answered. "But for me, I'll take my nights out after we get back to Bangkok next month."

Carter O'Connor heard none of this. He wasn't aware that his candle-lit face aroused endless curiosity among his men.

It had often happened. The workers couldn't help wondering what wealth of thoughts occupied O'Connor's hours of silence—thoughts that they could never seem to tap.

Not that their road boss held himself aloof during the working day. He could talk on endlessly, and interestingly. Indeed, it was Carter O'Connor's conversational resources that had held the men together during that hot stretch of desert grading when they thought they were going to run short on water. By his masterful handling of that crisis he had won the high respect of his better workmen. He was the staunch friend of every man who knew how to play square.

To be sure, there were some among his road crew, Americans and others, to whom square play was the only rule of the simple-hearted; these were the trouble makers. In dozens of ways they would crowd the others in an effort to

seize any unfair advantage. Sometimes it took stout fists reinforced with stout courage for Carter O'Connor to quell the riots.

Thus the boldest of the trouble makers were careful how they crossed O'Connor's path. He had strength and guts; moreover he had this everlasting mystery about him that could be seen in the silhouette of his lean brown face, deep in silent thought, by late candle light.

Much of his reading was necessarily confined to the four or five books he carried in his battered steel suitcase, especially the books full of charts, maps, and tables concerning Asia and the Southwest Pacific: the reconstruction of the war-torn lands following the defeat of Japan in the second world war.

Why should he bother to wade through such a welter of factual material was more than anyone could guess.

And whether the occasional letters he received from America had any connection with his other studies was another matter for conjecture. He always read with a frozen face, and not even "Slack" Clampitt, the slipperiest and most distrusted man of the crew, had ever attempted to pry into O'Connor's mail.

TONIGHT Carter O'Connor might have been fifteen thousand miles away from the sleepy little road camp. The recent letter from America had conjured up long-forgotten scenes of American small town life: the main street, thronging with harmless people on Saturday nights; the traveling stock company or medicine show; the county fair with its prize hogs, horseraces, confetti, and trapeze shows; the county courts; the band concerts; the football games; the bright-eyed country youths who would come, with all their pep and good humor, into the high schools; and the poor little rich girl who was forced to live in the big lonesome aristocratic house on Rocky Hill Drive.

Poor little kid.

The letter had made no direct mention of her, but its implications were that she was in dire trouble.

Well, there was little that he could do about it, living here on the other side of the world. And yet he felt a responsibility, for he remembered that his father had meant to help look after her when her parents had passed away.

But Carter's father, Harrison O'Connor, had been called to work on this side of the Pacific. Before his untimely death, the most he had been able to do for little Yolanda Vellum was to send John How across to America to live in the big stone mansion to help watch over her.

That was nearly eleven years ago. Carter O'Connor and his father had made the trip back for a brief visit, to make sure that that marvelous little Chinese got safely located and adjusted.

Eleven years ago. How far away in time and space it all seemed.

Yolanda had been only a seven-year-old child—a serious, artistic little creature living in a world of paper dolls.

How devoted to her paper dolls she had been. To him, then only a thirteen-year-old boy, it had been funny. She had even made a paper doll of him, and she declared she would keep it forever. For she never lost any dolls, or spoiled any, but kept them all.

Now she must be nearly eighteen. And he was twenty-five—too old to be remembered by her, but much too young to be acceptable as a god-father.

Was there anything he could do to help Yolanda, now that John How was nearing death? Wouldn't any intrusion on his part be unwelcome? Should he write her a letter? Send her money? Help her get a job?

No, that wouldn't do. Whatever fatherly advice he might offer, she would consider him a meddlesome stranger.

Carter O'Connor drew the blanket over his broad brown shoulders. The night breeze, filtering through the mosquito netting, was chilly. He moved the flickering candle.

The letter which had evoked all these far-away thoughts also cast a little more light upon the long, long search for the Chiam treasure. Not much, but a little.

"There must have been millions in that Chiam pile," O'Connor thought. "Maybe billions. No wonder men will scour continents for a trace of it."

He turned the letter over in his hands. It was as naive as all of George Wilmington's letters—a straightforward account of George's own doings as he would tell them to a confidential pal.

CHAPTER VI

A Letter with a Map

THE letter read:

Dear O'Connor: You used to warn me I belonged on a dump truck instead of the stage. Maybe so, maybe not. But you cursed me up one side and down the other when I hired out to Tolozell, the Siamese hypnotist. You were right. He's a snake.

I quit him this past summer. Cut loose in a hurry. Thought you'd like to know I'm free. Hope I don't meet him in a dark alley.

Here's the bloody lowdown, between you and me and the gatepost.

Remember telling me about John How, that your dad brought over from China and stuck away in a little town in a nice quiet job where he wouldn't get in any more political tangles and get himself killed?

Well, he damned near got himself killed in spite of it. Fact is, he may be dead by the time this reaches you. Accidental injury, they call it. Depending on what you mean by accidental. Judge for yourself.

I figure old Tolozell must have been combing the country just to find him.

Anyhow our big hypnotic show comes to this town and there is the Chinese sitting out in the audience, and Tolozell spots him before the curtain goes up.

Toward the last of the show Tolo gets him up on the stage. I figured there was some funny stuff in the air. Jeff, the other attendant, and I were on the outs, so he never told me anything. But I saw him and the boss do a quick search of John How's pockets the first thing. You see this other attendant, Jeff Cotton, was working hand in glove with Tolozell, and Tolo was doing lots of things besides running a show.

But the strange thing was that this little old Chinese pulled a clever advantage and announced that he was going to hypnotize Tolozell. Yes, and break a rock on his belly.

It almost happened, but Jeff Cotton managed to hook a stout black wire over the hammer, and he gave it a jerk just as John How swung. So John How got the hammer across his own head. It was plenty nasty.

It happened quick, and the crowd was too slow to catch on.

Everyone figured How would die right away. But he's still hanging on, last I heard.

After that, Tolozell gathered us up and took us to the West Coast in a hurry. He only took time to quote the laws to the officials. He told them that any injuries to John How were incurred at How's own risk, since we take no responsibility for damages to our subjects. He got away with it.

But I'm a rat's heel for letting the thing happen.

Fact is, I was just too slow to figure what the other attendant had up his sleeve when he looped the wire on. As soon as the hammer came down, he rushed in and got the evidence out of sight. He and Tolozell warned me they'd kill me if I told, and I believe it. They didn't have any qualms about almost killing John How. But what they really wanted out of him was a map. And they got it.

The whole mess looked like a hell of a deal to me. I wanted out, the quickest way. I felt like the devil, knowing about that wire. But I didn't tell anyone. You're the first.

However—and this will hand you a laugh—I did one little stunt that sort of made up for everything I missed. I stole their damned map.

That night in San Francisco when I packed to go, I copped it just before I closed the door on their snoring. So now I'm loaded down with something that's sure to get me killed, unless I find out what it's all about.

What can you tell me about it, O'Connor? Here's a sketch, showing Bangkok and a stretch of the Old Mandarin Road (which you boys of brawn are now changing into a group of parallel highways—and thank heavens I'm not still riding that dump-truck!). As near as I can guess, that star in the corner might be Annam.

The inset on my map has a lot more detail than I can sketch for you. I'll show you later. Anyway those little flibbertigibbets must be the Confucian buildings called Van-Mieu—the Temple of Literary Culture. Remember? There was a big courtyard all around, and I drank too much to Confucius and went to sleep under one of the arches. And woke up the next morning down on the bottom step.

Well, if I can get back to that Temple in the next few months it won't be to drink to Confucius. I'll need your help, O'Connor. There's gold on this map, marked in with a dab of gold paint. In fact it's got everything but a moving dot to show where Tolozell is—or where yours truly isn't, whichever way you want to put it.

Yes, Tolozell has flown, presumably for Siam. Right after he lost me and the map he high-tailed it for an airline passage. You think I can beat him, working my way over on a freighter?

Don't misunderstand, O'Connor. I'm not hinting for another loan. That wouldn't be right, when I haven't paid back the last. I'll get over somehow.

But I do need your advice. I know things have been plenty stormy, even though most of the Japs were supposed to have been kicked out. I don't fancy starting off on a treasure hunt and walking into a trap. And you can see how it is between me and Tolozell.

I'm still not clear on what you know about Tolo, aside from the fact that he's half Siamese and half Jap.

Anyway you were damned right about him, and I never could stand the smell of a skunk.

Write me what to do.

As ever,
George Wilmington.

P. S. There's one star in Tolozell's crown in spite of everything. Have you read about Katherine Knight, the new sensational dancer? He discovered her. Only last summer. And she's already been spotted by the International Circuit. Be sure to see her if she comes to Bangkok.—G. W.

* * * * *

BEFORE Carter O'Connor blew out the candle he wrote a check for eight hundred dollars to George Wilmington. He enclosed a brief message in the envelope with the money.

"When you arrive, George, be sure to come straight to me. We'll work this matter out together."

By the following night the letter was safely on its way.

Two days later the crew's most troublesome workman, Slack Clampitt, broke through O'Connor's walls of mystery. He seized his chance to rummage through O'Connor's battered steel suitcase. He stole a few highly revealing letters, including the recent one from George Wilmington, and skipped off for parts unknown.

CHAPTER VII

A Cut-Out Career

IT WAS lucky for Yolanda, in those tragic last days of John How, that the could take solace in her paper dolls.

Like anyone living under a burden of remorse, Yolanda had to have some escape from her own tortured soul.

For her that escape was new paper dolls. All kinds of them, beautiful, ugly, dainty, crude, subdued, flashy. She experimented rashly. She raced from one project to another, always just out of reach of that wave of bitter, anguished feelings. Feelings of guilt.

John How lay dying.

Why?

Because she had forced him to go to the hypnotist.

For her he had cast his better judgment aside and gone. Now he was slowly dying. His suffering was the price of satisfying her whims.

To lose herself in paper dolls might have seemed a childish escape if she had not been so very talented. Her experiments resulted in some highly attractive paper-doll creations. She sent a few to Katherine Knight, who in turn showed them to a theater costumer. As a result, Yolanda received an order for several large cardboard dolls to be used for a theater lobby display.

There was money in paper dolls!

Yolanda plunged into her new commercial work with a restless energy.

Jolly John How's valiant fight against death went on. He appeared to gather strength from the news of Yolanda's successful art work.

She didn't speak of him as Jolly John any more. When she went to his bedside she was always too much choked up to talk.

But John How could talk, and she could listen.

"My time short," he would say. "My strength going. But you—you have years to be strong . . . Don't grieve . . . Your strength must come back. And your laughter too."

Only after he had talked to her in this vein for many days did she begin to understand. He was not blaming her. Far from it. He knew that the agents of the Japanese Imperialistics had been scouring the country for him and would have found him sooner or later.

Continually he reassured her. "For all this trouble, you will be stronger than before. Remember my words."

This talk rang through her sleep. It whispered to her from the motionless little lips of her Jolly John paper-doll, its torn head patched with tape.

She would be stronger!

THE weight of remorse gradually bent her toward a purpose. She spent more hours listening to John How's mystical talk. She caught up his intense loves and hatreds and hopes. As if they were her own.

Never did he say where the treasure was. Only, "The White Paper Wand will lead you."

Then he gave her practice in cutting out the simple paper doll pattern—the

same little design that he had used on the dolls which had exploded. He called it the Chiam Doll.

A child might have done the original design: a round head, square-cut arms, triangular dress, and square cut legs.

"Try again. Try again."

Her clever hands flew. She cut heaps of newspapers into scraps. Wrapping paper, stationery, maps, magazines—she cut them to pieces by the thousands.

"Doing better," John How would say. "Keep trying. Must be able to cut true pattern every time."

To cut an identical pattern automatically! Yolanda thought it was impossible.

But the day came when she had outgrown that frenzied fear and she realized it was possible. John How's blurry little eyes could tell instantly whether a cut-out was the true pattern or not.

Her hands, too, could tell.

Shortly before the end came, John How lapsed into a quiet, peaceful mood that held over him until his death.

"You have learned well," he said. "You will carry on. White Paper Wand is yours."

It was a little frightening to take the Wand from his hands. But Yolanda realized what had happened. More than John How's art had been transferred to her. His strength of purpose was hers, and his faith.

That immense treasure which was the hope of the honest Chiams, John How's beloved people, was now her secret and her responsibility.

The Jap Imperialists, treacherous demons who worked through the black of night, were her enemies.

Tolozell, the Siamese Hypnotist, was a clever agent of the Jap Imperialists, and she hated him as she would hate any paid murderer.

SOMEWHERE over in the Orient the industrious Chiams were waiting, saving their choicest gold, hoping for the day that they could repair their temples and contribute to their common treasury again.

"When time comes to help, you will know," said John How. "Keep White Paper Wand. When in doubt, cut simple Chiam doll. If man is friend, doll will not explode."

"I understand," said Yolanda.

"Also Chiam Doll from White Paper Wand will lead to treasure."

"But I don't see how. If you could only explain—"

"Can't explain why compass points to north," said John How dreamily. "Can't explain why homing pigeon goes right way . . . Can't explain why Chiam doll from Wand always catch breeze, always drift along Mandarin Road toward treasure. White Paper must be white pigeons."

"I remember," Yolanda smiled indulgently, "and the silver knob and the long metal rod are a skyrocket. I'll trust to luck."

"Trust to luck," John How nodded. "Keep on with art until time comes. Then trust to luck."

CHAPTER VIII

A Confession of Superstition

FOR a time after John How's death the whole world came to a stop for Yolanda.

She was eighteen, now; much too young to carry the heavy responsibilities that the little old Chinese cook had left to her.

She would awake in the mornings and gaze out over the sleepy town, blanketed with snow, soft and peaceful under the lazy wintry sun. The warm comforts of life were close around her,

and it was like a disturbing dream to remember that somewhere on the other side of the world there was still a China, a Siam, a Mandarin Road, a few thousand industrious peasants toiling and hoping for something that was hidden—they knew not where.

For several weeks Yolanda immersed herself in her commercial art work, and all but banished the thoughts of all mysteries of far-off worlds.

But just as she was trying to destroy her faith in all the unknown and unusual properties of paper dolls, things began to happen which opened her mind as never before.

One such instance occurred at a large department store in the city.

Yolanda had gone there to decorate a window with paper dolls. The reputation of her very original paper creations was spreading; her dolls were admired by advertising artists, ever on the lookout for novel eye-catchers.

The extremely self-confident advertising manager of this particular department store became friendly. Too friendly. His advances smacked of sentiment with the ring of a cash register. He was too anxious to know all of Yolanda's doll-making secrets.

But his advances were checked by a sharp surprise. The moment he spied a simple little Chiam Doll gleaming from the pocket of Yolanda's sports coat, he rudely reached for it.

It exploded in his hands.

"Oh, I'm so sorry," Yolanda apologized. "I really can't explain, but believe me, I didn't intend—"

The advertising manager walked away without a word. He sent someone from the cashier's desk to pay Yolanda for her services, but his arrogance had evidently suffered too much of a blow for him to come back and face her.

As luck would have it, someone reported the occurrence to the owner of the store, and a few days later Yolanda received a letter containing an offer of a position. She declined it, however. She was developing her own art too rapidly to drop it for a dead-end job.

YOLANDA began to recover from the poignant grief over the loss of her old friend. There were bitter moments, of course; but her life was meant to be beautiful.

She plunged wholeheartedly into the job of studying fashions and free-lancing her designs for commercial use.

She received letters from Katherine Knight every week; and Katherine became the greatest of all encouragements to her to keep up the good work. Katherine's gospel was: Leave the Rocky Hill mansion. Go forth into the world.

What Katherine Knight had done, Yolanda knew, was more than a streak of luck. That skyrocket ride to success was backed by real talent and sustained by unlimited hard work. And undoubtedly Katherine would keep right on going. Already she was playing at one of New York's big theaters, doing costume dances in a mammoth show based on America's great battles.

Meanwhile Yolanda worked wisely and diligently to lay a foundation for a commercial success. Eight hours of every day went into solid work.

But her artistic eagerness did not stop when the working day was done. When she read or dined or rested, she thought of paper dolls. When she slept, she dreamed of them.

Each new person who came her way gave her ideas.

She made a paper doll of Randy, the new Cop on the corner. She plastered the cardboard with a coat of newspaper headlines about crimes and graft and arrests.

Later, many of her more elaborate

Randy-dolls were used by a Chamber of Commerce in connection with Safety Week. But the *original Randy*—the hastily painted cardboard cut-out—lay safely in her blue leather suitcase of originals.

THE first Kelly the Bellboy came out of a scrap of striped wallpaper. Later developments of this creation were in time used by a prominent Southern hotel. But the original Kelly the Bellboy took his place in the blue leather suitcase.

"Do you still put all your friends to bed at night?" Katherine asked in a letter from New York. "Do they still sleep in the blue suitcase? Do you still talk to them as if they were the real people?"

To which Yolanda wrote back a full confession. "I'm a practical eighteen-year-old business woman for eight hours a day. I have to do something after hours to entertain myself, don't I? Do you think I'm silly, Katherine, because I still play little girl? After all, they *are* people to me, because they listen to me so patiently. Yes, and they almost talk to me.

"Sometimes I hang several of them up together and make believe we're all having a conversation. If I blow just the slightest breath of air at them they all bow and say yes. If I wave the fan at them, they twist and say no.

"But that isn't all, Katherine. I may as well tell something that I can't help noticing. There's a strange connection between what happens to my dolls and what happens to the people they represent.

"Do you remember that handsome young attorney named Worthington? I placed him in the gold frame—the doll, I mean. And that very week he was appointed to be a judge.

"And then, of course, John How. I've never mentioned it before; but you must have thought of it. That week I accidentally tore my paper doll of him was the very week he had his accident.

"Months later when a new houseman was cleaning up, that poor torn doll was one of the things he gathered up and destroyed. I hate to say it, Katherine, but that was the week that Jolly John passed away.

"You'll say I'm superstitious. Maybe I am. But if you were I, and all these things *happened to the people* right after they *happened to the dolls,* how would you feel?

"Sometimes I can't sleep nights for wondering about it. It's a terrifying thing, when I get to believing that I'm partly responsible for what happens to all my acquaintances. Believe me, Katherine, I'm taking good care of *you.* Just last night I hung you on the wall, and put a different shade on the overhead light so there would be a bright spotlight on you."

CHAPTER IX

Firelight and Spotlight

KATHERINE KNIGHT wired that she would come by plane as soon as she could wangle a day off, and two weeks later she made it.

"That letter of yours got me," she said, as they taxied up the Rocky Hill Drive. "I couldn't take it—you falling in over your head that way—all those superstitions, I mean. We've got to talk it out, Yolanda."

But at first Yolanda was too excited over seeing Katherine again to hear what she was saying.

"How you've changed!" She exclaimed it several times in the course of their taxi ride. This new Katherine Knight, the daringly beautiful, confi-

dent dancer, was like something out of a surprise package.

That evening in the big living room of the Rocky Hill mansion they sat around the fireplace, keeping up a lively chatter, steering their talk away from things that mattered. The mansion could never be the same with Jolly John How gone.

A shutter rattled.

A nervous old uncle trudged through the hallway, muttering that he had seen the face of the devil peering in at the south porch window, and he was going to bed before he started seeing blue snakes.

Katherine laughed, saying that Yolanda's eccentric relatives were always seeing things; then the two girls began recalling the childish stories they used to believe about ghosts and goblins.

Another shutter squeaked, and Yolanda drew herself up sharply.

"There could be someone spying on us, you know."

She saw that her fright was only amusing to Katherine. She sat down again and resolved to dismiss her apprehensions.

"That comes from taking your superstitions seriously," Katherine laughed.

They drew closer to the dark glowing fireplace, and Yolanda waited silently for what she knew was coming.

"I couldn't believe it when you wrote me those things," Katherine said presently. "All those coincidences about the accidents that happen to your paper dolls and to the people they represent. Some folks might be led to kid themselves about such things. But you—"

Yolanda could not take her eyes off the fire. There were mighty secrets in her heart. It would have helped so much if she could only talk them to Katherine. But the barrier was growing formidable between them.

THEN, too, there could be ears listening from the dark hiding places.

"If the lawyer became a success because you put him in a gold frame," said Katherine, "I've no doubt you have all your paper dolls in gold frames by now, you're so good-hearted."

Yolanda nodded.

"If it would only work," she mused, "think what I could do for people."

"Gee, you're all serious down in your heart, aren't you?" said Katherine. She drew a deep breath. "Listen, pal, I've changed since the days I was scared to tell you I knew how to dance: now I'm looking the world in the eye. I know a plenty about a lot of things. I see a lot of these mind readers and fortune tellers, and so on."

"I'm not a fortune teller. I'm just—wondering if I can give a little boost to lots of people."

"Look, kid, you've told me that when something funny happens to your paper doll originals, that something happens to the person himself. Isn't that fortune telling? That's your angle, isn't it?"

"I suppose—"

"Well, of all the mindreaders and fortune tellers, do any of them go around saving the world? And the astrologers: do they stop wars and accidents and floods and fires?"

"They try to warn people of dangers. I'd do it too if I had a premonition that a lot of people were in trouble. Wouldn't you? Wouldn't you prevent it if you could?"

"Maybe, when you put it that way," said Katherine. "But what I'm saying is, you're not cut out for a racket like that. Because folks don't live by giving away free warnings. They live by renting themselves a hole in the wall and nailing up a shingle and ballyhooing for business. Maybe I'm looney, but I claim you're too much of an

artist to fall for that line. So what are you going to do?"

"You're the one giving the free warnings," Yolanda said, smiling. "What do you advise?"

"I'll hatch up something. As soon as I get in a bigger show I'll pull you in to design the stage. Honest, if I could just get a break, I'd work up some sort of doll dance, and have you fix up the set with a thousand cut-outs, all colors."

Katherine's daydream grew bright.

The fire was dying, and now most of the light came from the glow of a picture at the rear of the living room, with an electric lamp bordering the upper edge of the frame.

KATHERINE noticed it for the first time and gave an amused ejaculation.

"Yolanda! It's a paper doll of me! All in a big frame under a floodlight. Whatever made you—"

"Like it?" Yolanda asked quietly. "I think it looks well in this big room."

"Gee."

"You do like it, don't you!" Yolanda watched the curious expressions of delight play over Katherine's attractive face.

"You *are* serious about this thing!" Katherine gasped. "You're trying to do something big for me . . . I wish—"

"What?"

"That you wouldn't. It's swell of you and all that, but you're on the skids for big disappointments. I mean, if you think you can go on this way controlling people's lives. . . . Yolanda, do you remember the old paper doll you made of a boy that came from China to visit you one time—years ago when we were kids?"

"Carter O'Connor? Of course. Whatever made you think of it?"

"I still have it," said Katherine. "I thought you ought to know, seeing that you're so much in earnest about all this."

"But you lost it."

"Yes — and found it again — and never told you. I don't know why. Maybe it was because we had quarreled over him." Katherine's lively expression was lost in a mood of unusual gravity. Her voice was sympathetic, now, and contrite. "I'm sorry, Yolanda. It seemed a little thing at the time."

"Of course . . . But I'm glad you told me. I don't know whether he's living or dead. I was wondering the other day."

"You supposed him dead because his doll had been lost?"

"Yes."

Another silence.

"Anyway," Katherine concluded, "I still have the doll in my scrapbook. It's yours. I'll give it back to you this very hour. I'll call a taxi—"

The ring of the telephone interrupted.

It was a long distance from New York. The operator was trying to locate Katherine Knight.

Katherine took the receiver.

"Yes? . . . What? . . . The *International* Theatrical Circuit?" Katherine was breathless. "Yes . . . Yes . . . The salary? . . . At least two hundred a week? . . . Of course, those details can be worked out later . . . Two weeks on the West Coast? . . . Yes, and then? . . . Hawaii, Manila . . ."

YOLANDA did not hear all of the conversation, for the shutter caught her attention again, and this time she saw a man's face peering in through the frosty window. The face jerked away.

She crossed to a library table, opened a drawer, closed her hand over a small black pistol.

Slowly she advanced to the front

door, carefully opened it, and gazed out into the darkness across the dim snow. The eavesdropper had trampled a path along the windows. Now he was making a swift retreat, marked by a slight flurry of snow down around the east side of the house toward the driveway.

She watched until the dark form melted into the blackness a block away, out of range of the streetlight. Trembling, she returned to Katherine.

Katherine was dancing, laughing, squealing in a sort of dizzy, hilarious rhapsody.

"I've made it, Yolie! I've made it! The International Circuit! I'm in!"

Yolanda tried to get a grip on herself. Her fingers were quivering as she quickly replaced the pistol in the drawer.

But Katherine was too intoxicated with elation to notice.

"It's the break of a lifetime, Yolie! In two weeks I'll sail for the Orient. All those swanky theaters—Singapore —Bangkok—e v e r y w h e r e! It'll be your chance too, Yolie! I'll make them give me a stage designer."

"I knew you'd make it, Katherine."

"Gee, I've done it. It was just a matter of hard work—"

"Hard work," Yolanda echoed.

"And a break now and then, the same as anyone gets. And keeping myself under the spotlight."

Yolanda nodded; but she couldn't say anything now.

Then she saw that Katherine was looking toward the end of the room where the light shone down on a dancing doll in a massive picture frame.

In that moment the glorious triumph in Katherine's eyes gave way to a look of confusion. Her voice was tense with excitement, but the laughter had chilled.

"I've got to celebrate, Yolanda. I'll fly back to New York tonight. They'll all want to hear the big news. Get a taxi for me, Yolanda. I'll go back at once. You'll be hearing from me, pal. And—take it easy on those phoney ideas."

CHAPTER X

Tolozell Sets a Trap

TOLOZELL paced the wide carved steps of the Temple.

In the polished green marble at either end of the curved ascent he would catch a green reflection of himself; and the pleasure he derived from the sight kept him roving from one side of the portico to the other.

Jeff Cotton came up from the rickshaw path.

"Aren't they through with their damned pounding yet? They were supposed to have this Temple Hotel in running order by today."

"Operation begins," said Tolozell, "whenever guests arrive. I am a guest. You are the proprietor. The Temple Hotel is running."

"I'll be one hell of a proprietor," Jeff growled, "having to run to you for all decisions. We'll be lucky if the civil authorities don't get onto us and nose us out before there's time to do any good."

"Peace, Jeff Cotton. We're as solid as this marble. The Chiams don't know us. Your old-time Nazi connections have been lost in the dust of time. You wear a good American name. You've just come from overseas with a wad of dough—"

"It's damned little I've seen of it so far."

"And you've planted yourself here to run a hotel for show people. I'm a showman. I pay rent on your swankiest suite—"

"It'll be a hot day in the Arctic when

you pay rent," said Jeff Cotton; but for all his growling he was very much a part of Tolozell's frame up.

"And so," Tolozell went on, "you are sitting pretty in a fine prosperous business all your own."

"With you over my shoulder every time I ring the cash register."

"The guests who come and go will remark what a handsome proprietor you are—how tall and blond and stately."

"Just so none of 'em recognize me as a former handbill man."

"And when you tell them farewell with your politest bow, and call a rickshaw for them and wish them godspeed, they'll never guess that your station in life is that of a hypnotist's attendant."

"Oh, shut up. Give me a rest, will you? Have they finished installing my private bath? I'm wringing with sweat. I'll never get used to this sultry country."

"This sultry country," said Tolozell, pausing to admire his reflection, "holds much for you and me. Don't get restless and fly the coop like your old thorn-in-the-flesh, George Wilmington."

"Don't worry. I'm not fool enough to play lone wolf. He can shoot the rapids in a barrel if he wants to, but—"

"But he'll end up by getting himself shot," Tolozell added with crisp finality. He walked down the steps and out into the garden.

Jeff Cotton followed after him.

"Have you found a man for the job?"

"Not yet," said Tolozell. "Wait till your hotel business starts. There'll be a handy man around every few minutes."

"Then you have thrown our scheme open to the Jap Imperialists?"

TOLOZELL turned on Jeff Cotton with sullen anger.

"Who do you think has backed us all these years? How do you think we slipped through the Chiam authorities to grab this temple for ourselves? I've told you all along that this is no private deal."

Jeff Cotton lashed back with venom. "No, Tolo. I've seen you shake down too many customers to believe you'll let a treasure slip through your fingers. And if you think that I'm going to sit by—"

He cut short, for Tolozell's right hand doubled into an ugly fist, and the tic of his left hand was working at high speed.

"To spare the hotel a proprietor with a black eye," the Siamese hypnotist spat, "I restrain myself. Haven't I told you a hundred times that there's enough of the stuff to swim in if we can only find it?"

An angry silence held between the two men for several minutes. Tolozell moved on through the garden grounds, stopping to feign a dainty attention upon each separate flower.

Jeff Cotton followed along after him. There was much more that Jeff would have said if he had dared. He filled with rage when he thought how Tolozell's promises of wealth had shattered out.

Once in America they had been hot on the trail, it seemed. They had found the old Chinese who was famous for his having re-hidden the Chiam treasure. And when they lifted the map he carried, the precious gems were all but spilling down over their fingers.

But that innocent dumbbell, the second attendant, had flown the coop and snitched the map on the fly.

Did Tolozell have that map memorized? Were its details clear enough that he had been able to freeze onto its landmarks?

Jeff Cotton couldn't be sure. There had been time for only a few hours of concentrated study, and Tolozell had

acted none too well satisfied.

But that didn't mean anything, for Tolozell was always acting.

The map had flown, John How had died, and Tolozell had utterly failed to win any hypnotic power over the girl who was John How's confidante.

But Jeff Cotton knew that he had likewise failed in one of his maneuvers:

That wintry night when he had spied on Yolanda Lavelle, he had expected her to betray to her dancer friend all that she knew of John How's secrets.

She had betrayed nothing. Nothing but her impractical superstitions about paper dolls, and her very practical boldness in handling a pistol.

JEFF COTTON didn't like pistols. He didn't mind being Tolozell's front man, to shake the hands of prospective victims and ring the cash registers; but he wanted no messing with gunfire.

He had never reported to Tolozell that he had been scared away from the Rocky Hill mansion by a gun. He had only given an account of Yolanda Lavelle's silly superstitions and Katherine Knight's promotion to the International Circuit.

Those items had been enough to restore Tolozell's hopes.

"Another year and we'll be swimming in rubies," Tolozell had said.

"You'll not forget that I jerked the wire on the sledge hammer," Jeff Cotton had mentioned, not too discreetly.

"How could I forget?" Tolozell had retorted.

With the map and John How both gone, Tolozell and Jeff had hastened back across the Pacific to keep guard over the likely crossroads of treasure hunters. When they succeeded in pulling the wool over the eyes of the civil authorities, Tolozell again became optimistic.

"Sooner or later they'll find their way to us," Tolozell would say in his moments of confidence. "We'll erase Wilmington and embrace the girl."

Now as Jeff Cotton tagged along through the temple garden, observing the subtle mockery in the hypnotist's attention to the flowers, he was aware that the sound of hammers from inside the Temple Hotel had ceased. The plumbers and carpenters had been ordered to silence their work if any customers should arrive on the premises.

He looked back to see an American girl getting out of a rickshaw.

One of the attendants came running out to him.

"Mr. Cotton, your honor, there is a lady, Miss Katherine Knight, to see you."

CHAPTER XI

Katherine Walks into the Web

THE Temple Hotel, thought Katherine Knight, was the most exotic and therefore the most thrilling hotel she had ever seen.

The service was a trifle slow now and then, for the place was comparatively new, she had been told.

She and the other guests from the International Circuit troupe had their dinner out in the garden where they could see the full view of the temple reflected in a crystal pool.

Spaced through the garden were dainty little pagodas and curious Siamese statuary. The dinner party talk ran to speculations regarding the fabulous wealth of this great country in the years before the second world war.

Everyone agreed that all the modernizing was a blessing to the cosmopolitan world of tourists and business. Any ornamental temple was a more delightful place when turned into suites of rooms with baths.

The group laughed to discover that their talk struck one of the waiters as indecent blasphemy. But his rude anger was cut short by a cuff from the big yellow-haired hotel proprietor.

Katherine caught her breath. She kept telling herself that she had seen that proprietor before.

An impressive silence came over the dinner party presently. Across the crystal pool a very distinguished-looking Oriental seated himself. His heavy, brutal face turned neither to the right nor the left.

"That's Tolozell, the famous Siamese hypnotist," someone at Katherine's table whispered.

"This hotel *does* attract famous people," said another. "I'd give anything to meet him."

Katherine reached for her purse impulsively and scribbled on a note pad.

Mr. Tolozell—This is a pleasure to dine within view of the famous showman who started me on my dancing career.—Katherine Knight.

The waiter delivered the note and returned aglow with interest.

"Miss Knight, Mr. Tolozell would be so pleased if you will join him for dinner."

Warm thrills rushed to Katherine's temples as the admiring and envious eyes of her companions turned on her. Excusing herself, she allowed the waiter to escort her to the table on the other side of the pool.

Tolozell rose and bowed deeply. The waiter seated her, inquired whether there was any order, and marched away.

"I am most charmed at seeing you again," said Tolozell, beaming on her.

"It was terribly bold of me to announce myself," said Katherine coyly. "But after all, when one is far away from home, and an old friend comes along—"

"Exactly," said Tolozell. "I would have been offended if you had done anything else."

HIS manner was exceedingly polite and grandiose. Katherine was aware that her friends on the other side of the garden were watching her; but they were too far away to hear any of the conversation.

"You have come a long way, Miss Knight, since you first discovered you could dance," said Tolozell, his voice lowering to a confidential tone. "I trust you haven't forgotten it was I who first discovered you."

"Of course not. I could never forget."

"I was most delighted when I learned that you had been chosen for the International Circuit."

"It was lovely of you to send the flowers. And they arrived at the very happiest time possible. It was wonderful. We gave the day over to celebrating, and that evening at dinner your package came, and all my friends were there, and we drank to you."

"All your friends?" Tolozell lifted an eyebrow. "Then the young lady from your home town has dropped her grudge against me?"

"Who? Oh, you mean Yolanda Lavelle?"

"A very pretty blonde who came to the theater with you on the night we met—a timid sort of child, who refused to come up on the stage—"

"That was Yolanda. But she wasn't with us at the dinner party. If she had been, of course she would have drunk the toast to you—that is—"

Katherine grew confused. It occurred to her that she did not know what feeling existed between Yolanda and this hypnotist. She, Katherine, had been too busy with her own rise to fame to post herself on the aftermath of John How's accident. But she

had heard rumors, of course.

She felt that she was on thin ice; and after the gallantry with which this famous showman had received her she wished to guard their friendship.

"I wasn't aware," she hastened to say, "that my little hometown friend Yolanda held any grudges."

"Forgive me," said Tolozell, and the mockery in his half-closed eyes made Katherine wince. "One in my profession is always hearing untrue rumors. You will recall that Miss Lavelle's friend John How received an injury as a result of his own carelessness—"

"I'd rather not talk about it."

"But you do realize that foolish little misunderstanding," said Tolozell, "can be damaging to my good reputation."

KATHERINE breathed tensely. His defensive manner was crowding her for things she didn't want to say.

"Honestly, Mr. Tolozell, I don't recall ever hearing Yolanda Lavelle mention you in connection with John How's death. But when I see her—ah—if there's anything I can say—"

"Never mind," said Tolozell casually. "I may never see her again. After all, you and I are in the show business and it's good for both of us to be on friendly terms. But these little people who while away their insignificant lives in the small towns—"

"Please, Mr. Tolozell!"

Katherine rose angrily.

"I'm sorry, Miss Knight. I didn't realize. Please sit down. You're too charming a girl ever to be angry. I would like to try an experiment . . . Do you mind?"

"I'm not sure. What is it?"

"A little psychological experiment. Here comes the waiter with your desserts. I'll have him stand by for a witness, to see how well you do. You see, it's this way—"

Tolozell drew himself up with his most persuasive professional charm, though Katherine wondered if he was sure what he was going to do.

"It's this way," he went on. "I've often had my hypnotized subjects pretend they were eating and enjoying it. I wonder if you could pretend not to be eating, and at the same time consume your dessert."

"You mean while I'm hypnotized?"

"Exactly."

"Well—I—I don't exactly see the point, but if you—"

"Come, let's try it."

With the waiter adding his confident smile to the proposed experiment Katherine yielded.

While she sat at the table, Tolozell hypnotized her. And while she ate her dessert he planted solidly in her mind a post-hypnotic suggestion:

"You will send for Yolanda Lavelle. You will urge her to come at once. You are soon to have a better position in the show business and you will need your own stage designer. You must have Yolanda Lavelle here at once . . . You must send for her . . . Today . . . Today . . . You must . . ."

CHAPTER XII

Blind Trails

YOLANDA stepped down from the huge clipper realizing that this was the end of her swift journey. The end, and yet only the beginning.

This was Bangkok the Beautiful, a fantastic skyline of ornamental towers and pagodas.

Bangkok — and she didn't know where she was going from here.

She checked most of her baggage at the airport, refused the taxis and rickshaws, and walked swiftly down the trafficway toward an American drug

store. She carried only her lightweight blue-leather suitcase and blue purse.

All the way she had been wondering what she would do when she arrived here. The thousands of swift miles had failed to clarify her course of action.

The expected thing, she knew, was for her to locate Katherine Knight as soon as possible and announce that she had arrived. And yet—

"I mustn't think such things," she told herself. "I'm being foolish to recount old injuries. She didn't hurt me intentionally, of course. I'll find a phone booth and call her at once."

The strangeness of the Oriental faces gave her a queer shaky feeling. These streets were full of ghosts of the past. In every kindly pair of almond eyes she would see John How; in every cold, cruel face there was something of that murderous old hypnotist, Tolozell.

The drug store was full of noisy voices and clashing colors, and she yielded to a desire to hide away in an obscure corner.

There were phone b o o t h s, and no doubt Katherine could be contacted within a few minutes' time. Was it not Katherine who had urged her to come? Perhaps Katherine was awaiting eagerly for a new stage setting adorned with the choicest of paper dolls.

"Why am I skeptical about my chances as a stage designer?" she asked herself. "Have I any reason to distrust Katherine's invitation? After all, she's my best friend, in spite of—"

And there Yolanda found herself doing it again—l e t t i n g her mind jump back to that night by the fireplace, to retrace all the little differences that had so suddenly heaped up into an icy barrier.

A face had been at the window that night, and Yolanda had been forced into a fight against an unseen, unknown enemy.

But Katherine had failed to sense its presence.

Yolanda had been striving, that night, to lift her friend up to new heights in the show world.

Perhaps it was superstition; the fact remained that Katherine disregarded her efforts.

Again, Yolanda's whole soul was filled with the determination to carry on old John How's ideals.

But Katherine knew nothing of these mystical hopes.

ON THE other hand Katherine was glorying in a s u c c e s s that she credited to the Siamese Hypnotist.

But Yolanda knew that Tolozell was evil through and through.

Then, last but not least, there had been that tiny matter of a paper doll—the childhood work of art that represented a boy by the name of Carter O'Connor.

Katherine had said, in a most contrite voice, that she would bring Carter O'Connor back.

But the fresh burst of success which came to her by telephone caused her to forget. And so she had hurried back to New York to share her jubilation with other friends—friends who had no superstitions about helping her career along by placing paper dolls under floodlights.

"Those were our differences," Yolanda thought. "But I can't let them haunt me. I've come back to reconcile them. We'll take each other on trust. That's it—trust."

She was opening the purse to pay the waiter. Her hands stiffened. The sight of the gleaming little Chiam doll caught her eye, and the word trust caught in her throat.

"No—no," she whispered, almost aloud. "I'll never put *her* to the test. Better that I try myself—"

Her fingers closed on the little Chiam doll.

She laid it on the table, and found herself breathing more easily. It was a comfort to know that the gleaming white paper would not explode in her own hands.

She paid the waiter, and gathered up her small suitcase and blue purse. She would go into the booth and phone at once.

But just as she reached for the little white paper doll, it slid from the table as if caught in an air current from an electric fan.

She reached to the floor for it. But it scooted out of her hands.

The waiter started to help her.

"No, please. Let it go," she said hastily. "It is of no importance."

The paper doll drifted along the floor, past the fingertips of many who made a gesture as if to rescue it for her. She shook her head at them.

"Let it go, please. Don't touch it. It is only a silly trick."

She left the noisy, crowded place in a weird hush, and her one quick backward glance told her that everyone was watching in utmost amazement.

She clung to her suitcase and purse, and walked away, swift on the trail of the invisible air current that carried the paper doll.

IT LED her not into the city but away from it. She found herself following alleyways, dodging trash piles, cutting across vacant lots and neglected gardens. These were the ragged outer corners of the city.

Beside an old concrete highway the paper doll came to a stop.

With a sigh Yolanda dropped her little blue suitcase and sat down on it to rest. It was high noon. A sultry sun baked her forehead. Her new blue turban was no protection.

For an hour she watched the highway. Its bloodstream was thin—mostly rickshaws or p e d e s t r i a n s. A few passers-by stopped and tried to talk with her, but their languages didn't mix. The earnest jabber of the Siamese would make Yolanda laugh.

Laughter was good for easing the tension. The good neighbors would drop their troubled manners and go on their way laughing too.

What a stranger Yolanda was—and in what a strange world. And yet she was almost glad that she couldn't talk their native language. For what would she have said?

"I am following this paper doll wherever the breeze blows it—" No, that would never do. The people would think her crazy.

"I am being led by an invisible power. What it is I don't know. But it will take me to the hidden treasure that belongs to the Chiams. I, a stranger in this land, will save the people from anarchy and ruin."

Yolanda worked over these blunt statements in her mind, and thought how impossible they would sound. To anyone who hadn't known John How such explanations would sound like silly ravings.

It was in moments like these that Yolanda would stop and ask herself if this was all a wild-goose chase.

But there was the simple little paper doll rolling down the street again. Did it *know* where to go?

An approaching pedestrian bent to pick it up and *it exploded in his hands.*

Yolanda held her breath until the angry old Siamese, eyeing her suspiciously every step of the way, was safely past.

She hastily opened the little blue suitcase, unwrapped a new six-inch square of paper from the Wand, and cut an accurate duplicate of the Chiam doll.

It hurried away from her like an errant autumn leaf. She gathered up her things and struck out after it. The blessings of John How were still guiding her.

CHAPTER XIII

A Godfather Rides Past

LATE in the afternoon Carter O'Connor rode past Yolanda on a motorcycle.

It had to be him. She was sure of it the minute he was gone.

The worst of the afternoon's sunshine was over and Yolanda was still hiking along the rutted old highway when the brief meeting occurred. She was almost ready to drop from fatigue and thirst.

Twice a brand new double ribbon of concrete had crossed the old trail, but each time the dusty little paper doll had scooted along the old way like a train shooting past switch tracks.

Yolanda's throat had grown terribly parched.

When the big truckload of laborers rumbled to a stop and some husky American voices had yelled at her to ask where she was going, she could hardly answer.

And having no definite information, she pointed and mumbled, "Going down the road—that way."

"You're getting a long way outa civilization," someone hollered back. "Nothing down that way but desert. Sure you're goin' the right way?"

Yolanda said she was sure.

"Well, you'll find our camp about ten miles down the line if you get that far."

The truck roared into action and sailed away. Yolanda read the name on the rear:

CARTER O'CONNOR, HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION.

It startled her so that she could hardly fathom it.

Then the motorcycle followed up, also speeding on its way to Bangkok. It shot past her, and the big handsome suntanned rider glanced back, cut his speed, and turned around.

He yelled at her as he came back to circle slowly around her.

"Hey, there, are you lost?"

"N-no."

"Okay—I just wondered . . . Thirsty?"

"Yes!"

The rider jerked a canvas-covered canteen off the luggage carrier and tossed it to the grass beside the concrete.

"There. Sure you don't want a lift back to town?"

"No. Thanks for the water."

"Don't mention it."

The motorcyclist sped away, and Yolanda sat there in the shade sipping from the canteen. And all at once she knew.

Yes, it had been Carter O'Connor. Her memory of his boyish face was too strong for her to be mistaken.

"Like a godfather in a fairy story!" she thought. "Just when I was dying for a drink! And to think—he wanted to give me a lift!"

THE paper doll was urging her on. She summoned her strength and resumed her valiant hike. Now she walked with added energies—wrought-up nerves.

Carter O'Connor! A grown man, strong and handsome, with gleaming white teeth and a hearty voice and the quick thoughtfulness and friendliness to do a stranger a good turn.

Yolanda was glad from her heart that the fates had made her path cross his.

But the moment's meeting had left her heart with a hungry aching. Would

their paths cross again?

The paper-doll symbols through which Yolanda's thoughts played were already assembling an answer to her question. Instantly she knew that *if* the original paper doll of Carter O'Connor were in her possession she would place it and a paper doll of herself on a library table somewhere, side by side, so that they could become close friends!

But the paper Carter O'Connor had been lost to Katherine Knight.

She walked a trifle faster. Jealousy, too, could feed one's nerves with energies that needed to be worked off.

Thunder growled from the northern skies and then raindrops came spilling down.

But the mud-speckled paper doll kept dancing along in the swirling breeze, and now there was no chance for Yolanda to stop and rest her aching feet.

She watched through the darkening drizzle, thinking that soon a house or a wayside tavern must surely appear among the jungle-banks of trees. The winds were rising, the rain was holding back. She must somehow find shelter before the storm broke.

She ran to try to catch the runaway bit of paper. If she could only hide it away in her purse until the weather was more favorable—but no such luck. The poor, dirty, ragged scrap of doll went sailing right on, as if daring her to lay hands on it.

Now the suitcase was more burden than she could endure. Her arms were aching like slow fire.

At last there appeared some small knobs of stone architecture peeking up from the low shrubbery. They were low, massive ornamental lantern towers, no taller than a man; apparently they hadn't been used for years.

There was room to hide her suitcase on the base of one of these, beneath the four arched legs. She placed it so that it would have some protection from the weather.

She marked the spot well, for the suitcase contained her most precious possession, the White Paper Wand.

"Would John How take such a risk?" she asked herself.

But there was not time to debate the matter. The gray little Chiam doll was drifting on down the gray, choppy roadway. It was all her blurry eyes could do to keep track of it, for the sky was growing heavier and darkness could not be far off.

Her tired feet hurried on, and her eyes kept searching the nearby forests. And yet, for all she knew, the paper doll might be drifting toward a destination fifty miles away—or a hundred—or a thousand.

Heartsick at these forebodings, she hardly knew when the rain began to plummet down in earnest. She was aware that other old roads had branched in to this main stem, but soon she had lost track of how many such there were.

The trees whipped and snapped with the wind, the heavy raindrops slapped down on her shoulders. Her blue turban grew heavy and released streams of water down over her face when she ran.

At last the little gray water-soaked Chiam doll went where she could not follow it. It fell into a sluice rushing with rain waters. The last that Yolanda saw of it, it was being whirled off into the black jungles by the rushing flood waters.

Yolanda's only guide was gone!

And she was hopelessly lost.

CHAPTER XIV

Rain and Blood

THE road was almost a river of water.

Yolanda no longer knew which way she was going. She hoped she was still on the way toward the roadmen's camp, for that was the only refuge of which she had heard.

Under the heavy downpour she was completely soaked. Her shoes, tied over her shoulders, were like two little pitchers of water. Barefooted, she waded on through what seemed a swift, shallow, paved river.

Something like a house showed under the purple lightning. She groped for the path, found her way into the shelter of the low curved porch roof.

It was not a house but a pagoda. The wind roared through its open sides. Continual waterfalls spilled over its edges. But it offered a roof, and Yolanda accepted the offer.

She dropped down on the dry rocky floor and cried for several minutes. She was so tired, so afraid, so completely lost.

But her soft sobbing sounded foolish to her—so weak and futile, contrasted against the sounds of thrashing trees and ripping thunder.

Lightning flashes would reveal the jungle storm in blinding purple patches framed in the hard black of stone doors and windows. For the instant her shelter would take on the qualities of size and form, and every vivid detail of the crisscross bars and foliations around the open walls would be exposed.

Yolanda took advantage of every flash to see more of this black shelter. She groped toward the sounds of flapping curtains. Soon a blaze of lightning revealed two weatherbeaten pieces of drapery hanging at the sides of a window.

The draperies were full of the smell of dust. But the rain hadn't reached them, and Yolanda was in dire need of dry clothing. She jerked the draperies down and shook the dust out of them. She got out of her watersoaked clothes, and wrapped herself in the tattered cloth. It was harsh and scratchy, but warm.

She wrung the water from her discarded clothing and found a shelf along the wall where she could spread it out, safe from rain and wind.

For a place to sleep through the night she chose the dry stone floor beneath a massive wooden table, where she would be partially shielded from the brilliant lightning flashes.

She made bedding of the remainder of the draperies, wondering as she did so, whether she was committing any sacrilege; or whether the draperies of such a place should be touched only by those who came to pray.

She consoled herself by offering a little prayer before she went to sleep—a prayer to the lost paper doll of Jolly John How—that she might have the courage to go on with his unfinished work . . .

She was awakened by voices that shook her out of frightened dreams into reality.

AT FIRST she thought she had hardly slept. But the storm was gone, bright moonlight was glistening on the drooping wet tropical leaves outside the windows.

The voices were approaching from the opposite side of the pagoda. Two men were talking in fluent American. Their rough slang was incongruous with the sacred air that Yolanda felt belonged to this ornamental little pavilion.

The voices were quarrelsome.

"Talk fast," one of them said. "I'm in a hellova hurry."

The voice was high and taut.

"What's the big hurry, Heavy? I told you I'd meet you here to talk over something big." This was a low smooth drawl. It came from the taller man,

Yolanda knew, now that their silhouettes came into view beyond the farthest door. "Settle down, Heavy. I want some information on O'Connor."

"O'Connor'll be expecting me back soon, Slack. He sent me out for a errand."

As the chunky fellow talked on in his high nervous voice, he snapped on a flashlight and shot it around through the open interior of the pagoda.

The beam crossed Yolanda's eyes, turned back on her for a split second, then flashed off.

"What's the idea?" growled the tall thin fellow, who went by the name of Slack.

"Just makin' sure there's no one around," said Heavy. "You never know."

"There'd be no one at this godforsaken place," said Slack. "Not unless you planted 'em here."

"Or you."

"Don't be stupid," said Slack. "You oughta know by this time I'm a lone wolf."

The chunky fellow stood inside the arched doorway and folded his arms.

"All right, Lone Wolf Clampitt. What am *I* doing here?"

"I'm givin' you a chance," said Slack Clampitt, "to get in on a good thing. I'll take all the risks. All you gotta do is give me a few little hunks of information while the information's hot. No stale stuff, you understand. This job calls for timing to a T. Get me?"

"Go ahead."

"Okay, Heavy. Listen close. The first thing you gotta do is fix things so that you can bust away from work at any minute without O'Connor's getting suspicious. Have yourself some errands cooked up and ready. That way when a particular letter comes, that I want to hear about—"

"Breakin' away from work ain't so easy." The chunky, high-voiced fellow shuffled his feet restlessly.

"How'd you get away tonight?"

"O'Connor went into town," said Heavy. "He's takin' in the shows most every night. Gotta mean crush on that little black-haired American dancer."

"Wait a minute," Clampitt snapped. "You don't mean that snappy-eyed one named Katherine Knight? . . . Huh?"

"What's it to you? You're a lone wolf."

"M-m-m . . . That damned O'Connor thinks he owns the world . . . Wait a minute—you said he sent you on an errand!"

"Huh! Yeah—that is—" Heavy gulped with confusion. The darkened flashlight twisted in his hands nervously.

SLACK CLAMPITT was angry, now, and he whirled toward the short plump fellow with a threatening gesture.

"Don't go stringin' me with a line of lies, Heavy. Let's get this straight. If O'Connor sent you out on an errand, what the hell was it?"

"I'm not stringin' you, Slack, honest. He did ramble in to the show, like I said. But he phoned back—"

"Yeah?"

"And said there was a woman strayin' down the road, within eight or ten miles of camp."

"Woman? Young or old?"

"He didn't give her pedigree. Just said he figured she'd get caught in the storm, and Jones and I had better ride out on bicycles and pick her up."

"Hm-m-m." Slack Clampitt was skeptical. "Where's Jones?"

"Probably back at camp by now. He took the other branch. Maybe he found her, maybe not."

"Here," said Clampitt. "Give me your light. Let's take a look around."

Heavy made a pass, but the flashlight conveniently slipped out of his hands and clattered to the floor. He must have previously unscrewed the lens, for it all fell with a crash and a clatter.

"Hell's bells," Heavy growled. "How'd I do that? O'Connor'll give me the devil."

He picked up the pieces, but presently he muttered that the bulb was on the blink.

Yolanda took a deep relieved breath. She had been on the verge of making a break for the out-of-doors. She had bound the makeshift clothing tightly around her body, and had proceeded, with utmost care, to gather her damp clothing and her purse in a compact bundle.

She felt sure that Heavy knew she was here; that flashlight had caught her when she had first awakened.

But he had played a secret hand against Slack Clampitt from the start. Instinctively she knew she was being protected.

The moon was slipping down low in the western skies. Time was growing short. Slack Clampitt told his informer to sit down and forget about the flashlight.

Slack went over the list of instructions two or three times to make sure that Heavy understood.

"Pick up every whit of information about George Wilmington."

"O'Connor never mentions him."

"Well, there'll be a letter or a wire from him soon. When it comes, I want to know it."

"Why?"

"Because he's on our list."

"I never had a thing against George," said Heavy. "As long as he stuck on his truck and stayed on his own side of the road—"

"Listen, Simple," Slack mocked. "If you knew that George Wilmington was fixin' to bust into a million dollar pie, and not say a word to you about it, do you figure you'd take it lyin' down?"

"A million? You're talkin' silly."

"A million, easy, and heaven knows how much more. He's bumped into it by accident. It's hid over here somewhere, and he'll be comin' over with a neat little map tucked in the pocket of his Sunday suit—"

"Slack Clampitt, you're talking through your hat," Heavy sneered. "You've had a bad dream—"

"Dammit, I've got the letter right here—"

THE silhouette of rapidly shuffling arms made Yolanda's blood freeze. It happened almost faster than she could see.

She thought that Slack Clampitt was reaching into his pocket for the letter.

At the same instant Heavy jerked at his pocket and came up with a pistol.

"I'll take that letter, Slack Clamp—"

Crack!

It was a gun, not a letter, that Clampitt drew from his pocket. He shot first and did his talking afterward.

The single shot must have plugged the chunky man squarely in the heart. Heavy fell forward on his face. His elbow struck the empty flashlight case and sent it clinking across the stone floor.

"I figured you were up to double-crossin' me, Heavy," the tall lanky man muttered, gathering up the other's gun. "I saw your jealous eyes watchin' me the night I lifted O'Connor's letters. So I decided I'd call your hand. Got anything more to say?"

Silence.

Slack Clampitt pushed the body over with his foot and Yolanda could see a black pool of blood.

The murderer bent down to listen for

any hint of breathing. Then he straightened up.

"I didn't figure you'd have anything more to say."

With that, Slack Clampitt turned and walked off into the moonlit jungle.

CHAPTER XV

A Purely Business Tete-a-Tete

THE following noon at the road builders' camp Carter O'Connor was the most surprised man west of the Pacific.

It was Yolanda Lavelle!

At first he couldn't believe it. But as soon as she spoke of John How, the tragic accident at Tolozell's show, and the inevitable passing of the little old Chinese cook, O'Connor could no longer doubt.

"I came," Yolanda said apologetically, "because I promised John How—"

She reeled dizzily. Carter O'Connor helped her to a canvas cot. He called orders to two or three of his men. The girl wasn't well.

"I—I think I'm just a little frightened," Yolanda said.

"Nonsense. It's overexertion in this tropical heat. You've got to rest," said O'Connor. "One of the boys has gone to pick up a native nurse a few miles down the road. She's a blustery old Siamese grandma, but she knows just what to do for folks like you."

"I—I've got to tell you something—something dreadful."

"Nothing can be so important that it can't wait till you've had a drink." He forced a glass to her lips.

The sight of her, clad in ragged strips of native cloth bound tightly around her partially naked body, was puzzling to Carter. Her yellow hair was in disarray, her cheeks were flushed from the sun. Her blue eyes were bright with intense excitement.

Strange, he thought, that a girl of such loveliness should come walking out through the hot sun. The canteen he had tossed to her on the previous afternoon had evidently been lost. So had her luggage. The rainstorm, of course, accounted for her change of clothing.

It was stupid of Jones and Heavy to fail to find her last night, thought Carter. But as for this morning, why hadn't she hailed a ride back to the city with one of the supply trucks?

"Please lie down," Carter repeated. "You can talk just as well. If you had only called me from Bangkok I'd have saved you all this walk."

"But I wasn't coming here," said Yolanda. "Not until what happened last night. Then I had to come—and like a scaredy-cat I was afraid every minute that Slack Clampitt would jump out of the bushes and murder me."

"Slack Clampitt!" Carter felt the blood leave his face. "Where'd you ever run across—"

"I saw him kill a man last night—one of your men—"

"Heavy!" Carter saw the girl nod weakly, and he began to understand the terror in her eyes.

"They were trying to get together on a deal over a stolen letter from someone named—"

"Wilmington?"

"That's it. Then they suddenly pulled guns on each other." The girl's eyes went closed.

"There, Miss—Yolanda. That's all right. Don't think about it. There's nothing you can do. Only—I hope you weren't mixed up in it?"

"No. Clampitt didn't know about me. I'd taken refuge in the pagoda. When I first heard the voices I was too late to rouse up and run away. So I lay there hiding, helpless. I didn't know they had guns."

"You're quite certain that Heavy is dead, not just wounded?"

YOLANDA nodded. "I was afraid to tell anyone but you. You're almost the only one I know—and I didn't have time to find out who could be trusted."

"It isn't always easy to tell when you're living among gangs of underground trouble-makers. Until the last few weeks I've trusted Heavy—"

"I can always tell whom to trust," the girl murmured quickly. "John How taught me."

Carter was still gazing at her when she dropped off to sleep a few minutes later.

His thoughts rambled back to the few memories of old John How. He hadn't known the man well, as this girl evidently had. But he recalled the high respect which his father, along with all the native Chiams, held for the master Chiam mystic.

In John How's hands had been placed not only the keys to the great Chiam treasury, but also the secret gems of Chiam science and magic.

And now here was an eighteen-year-old girl, a stranger to this land, who blandly echoed the late Chiam master.

She could tell whom to trust. John How had taught her.

A feeling of awe came upon Carter O'Connor. He had little to say the rest of the day.

The old Chiam nurse arrived, to make much fuss over the girl's beauty while applying her native ointments and prayers. A group of men went out to find and guard the slain body of Heavy. The secretary made out a report of the affair and drove away to notify the civil authorities. Work slowed down to snail pace along the new roadway. There was tough talk among the workers; if the civil authorities didn't hang that damned Slack Clampitt they'd do it themselves. The straw bosses listened to this bluster and didn't cavil.

Meanwhile Carter O'Connor stayed near the tent, to be within call when Yolanda Lavelle awakened.

IT WAS early evening when he joined her and they shared a workman's dinner of rice and black coffee. Yolanda was looking much better for her rest, and insisted that she needed no native prayers or ointments, only plenty of solid nourishment.

"I still don't understand," said Yolanda, "why you seemed so very surprised to see me. Didn't you know I might be making a trip to this land?"

"Should I have known?" said Carter. "Did you write me, or send a cable—"

"No, but my friend Katherine Knight is over here, and she wrote asking me—"

"Is Katherine your friend?" Carter felt a thrill of surprise that was not particularly comfortable. In recent weeks he had found the black-eyed American dancer a very bewitching girl, but just now the thought of her was jarring.

"You do know her, then?" Yolanda said, and there was a look of deep curiosity lingering in her intense blue eyes.

"Why, yes. She and I are quite friends. That is, I've been seeing her quite often, now that she's playing here at Bangkok. You know how it is, Americans a long way from home."

Carter paused. Yolanda's face was full of questioning, but she apparently meant to ask nothing more. Well, there was more he wanted to tell her, and much he hoped to ask.

"It's strange," he went on, "that Katherine never mentioned knowing a girl like you. Did you know her in New York?"

"New York?" Yolanda's face betrayed amusement. "Don't you re-

member seeing my playmate, Katherine, when you visited the Rocky Hill mansion, eleven years ago? We both did everything we could to entertain you, though we probably only annoyed."

Carter gave a reminiscent nod. "So that's who she is. She said I was supposed to know her. Well, I'm still a bit flabbergasted that I missed the connections. The fact is, she's had so many things to tell me about the show business and her particular worries that we haven't got around to talking America."

Yolanda nodded and fell silent again. Carter saw that she felt very much left out. It was strange, indeed, that Katherine had never mentioned Yolanda might be coming.

"You'll have to excuse her," said Carter. "She's been rather on a spot with the manager of her circuit. You're her friend. I'm sure she won't mind my telling."

"Perhaps I'd better not hear," said Yolanda. "We had best confine our talk to — er — strictly business. In fact—"

"You're not interested in Katherine?" Carter broke in abruptly.

"Of course I am."

"Then get a load of the jam she's in. She's sent to America for a stage-designer. She did it without authority. Even offered to pay the designer's expenses. It was a rash thing to do."

"Very."

"But she's been skyrocketed to success, and somehow her optimism got the better of her. She tells me—"

CARTER hesitated, realizing he was taking liberties with Katherine's confidences; but he felt that this lovely, serious friend from America must understand Katherine's plight.

"She tells me that she was simply *compelled* to do the rash thing. Some irresistible inner urge *demanded* that she get her own stage designer. But now the big manager tells her it was all wrong. So you see how it is. If this designer comes, Katherine's future is darned uncertain."

Yolanda's lips curled with amusement. "Wouldn't that put her in the same class with everyone else?"

Carter smiled. This girl was, for some mysterious reason, being exceedingly cautious about commenting upon her friendship with her old childhood playmate.

She rose from the shaky little camp table and took the arm of the old Siamese nurse to be led back to the cot.

"Things might have been less complicated for Katherine," she said airily, "if the American stage designer had cabled her plans about coming. Are you going to see Katherine again soon?"

"Tonight," said Carter. "If you'd care to go with me—"

"Thank you, but the nurse and I have conspired to put me to bed early. Just tell Katherine for me that she need not worry. Her stage designer won't be dropping in. That engagement has been cancelled."

Carter knocked over a coffee cup without even noticing. The force of this girl's personality was getting the better of him. It was damaging to his egotism.

If it had been a rough-and-tumble scrap between two steel-fisted men he could have waded in and bumped their heads together and brought them to their senses.

But the forces of conflict in this subtle interplay between two entrancing females slipped right through his fingers.

"I'll tell her," Carter said curtly, starting away, "that I've received a message directly from the stage de-

signer, who happens to be too busy hiking around witnessing murders to report her presence."

He stalked halfway out of the tent, then turned to look back. The Siamese nurse muttered at him to go on to his show or he'd be late. She was applying more ointment to Yolanda's face.

A sudden impulse struck Carter. He was used to winning his battles even if they took physical force. He marched back to Yolanda.

He deliberately pressed his palms against her cheeks and tilted her face upward. Her serene beauty went through him.

He could have kissed her, then. But there was a cool defiance in her eyes that made him think twice. He let his hands slip away.

He turned to the nurse. "I wouldn't apply any more of that stuff. Her face is cool enough."

LATE that night when Carter motorcycled back to camp from Bangkok he had a passenger hanging on with him—Katherine Knight.

Katherine had sworn she wouldn't eat or sleep until she found Yolanda and squared things.

"I owe that gal a lot of apologies," Katherine kept saying, "and maybe she owes me one or two. Anyway I've got to see her."

But when they rode into camp Yolanda wasn't to be found. The nurse said she had picked up a ride to town.

CHAPTER XVI

A Phantom from the Temple Basement

IT WAS nearing daybreak when Carter O'Connor drove Katherine back to Bangkok in the sleek gray roadster.

She was distressed over their failure to find Yolanda.

"Leave it to me," Carter said. "I'll have the civil authorities locate her. They'll notify airports and rail and bus lines."

He turned off the main thoroughfare at the sign which pointed to the Temple Hotel. One of Katherine's several clashes with her manager was her staying at this place. The manager said it was off the beaten trail. But Katherine was sure it was the newest swankiest magnet for show people.

"All the big independent show folks are going to be staying here."

"Such as?"

"Well, there's Tolozell, the famous hypnotist."

Carter drew in a sharp breath. "Staying there now?"

"Yes. You know him?"

"I've heard of him. Katherine, I've got to straighten you out on a few things. You've heard of the Jap Imperialists. You know there's lots of underground business afoot."

"Please, Carter," Katherine squirmed impatiently. "I can't take any more lecturing tonight. And I don't like you when you put on that stern manner. Here's the driveway to the hotel . . . Aren't you going to be the least bit chummy before I go in?"

"Listen, Katherine," Carter said savagely. "These Jap Imperialists have the power to do harm to everyone of us. Right now I'm in danger of having to close down my roadwork for lack of funds. There's a wealthy society called the Chiams. If they can't reorganize and give the civil authorities some financial support, I may find myself out of a job."

"That's wonderful!" Katherine exclaimed. "Then when my circuit sends me on to Burma you can come along. Cheer up, Stony Face. Treat yourself to a lark."

She draped an arm over his shoulder

as he drew to a stop in the Temple Hotel driveway.

He disregarded her gesture, for in that moment he was struck by the sight of a tall, spare figure emerging from a dimly lighted basement door.

The tall shadowy man was startled by the car lights. He turned back swiftly, and the slippery movements of his angular shoulders were familiar to Carter O'Connor. A familiar phantom that had haunted the road boss in many a night gone by.

The narrow ornamental door to the lower Temple level closed silently, and the dim orange light from within was gone.

CARTER was aware, then, that Katherine was patting him gently on the cheek, teasing for a chummy good night —or rather a good morning—kiss. The gray skies were growing whiter overhead.

"Your mind's not on your work this morning," Katherine said caustically, drawing away from him.

"It will be, later in the day," said Carter.

"Oh. You mean you're intending to find—"

"The civil authorities. I've plenty of business to lay before them. They've got to dig in and come up with some funds or they'll have an unfinished road on their hands. And I've a thing or two to say about a certain underground crime wave—Katherine!"

"I'm going in!" She was out of the car and on her way.

"Wait, Katherine. You've got to tell me something. This Tolozell—has he tried to hypnotize you since you've been here?"

Katherine came back to the car slowly.

"What difference does *that* make?"

"I've just remembered—you said you didn't know *why* you sent for a stage designer—but that you felt compelled. Answer me, Katherine, was it *your* will to do it—*or the will of someone else?*"

The girl stammered, and it was plain that her nerves were all unstrung. She broke into tears.

"I—I don't know. How can I know anything, with all the mess I'm in. My job is to dance, not to settle up all your old troubles."

"All right, Katherine. Forgive me. Run along and get some rest so you'll be feeling fine by show-time tonight."

He drew her into his arms and kissed her tenderly.

"There . . . Just forget about everything that's happened."

"And I'll see you after the show tonight?" she begged.

"You'd better go right to bed."

"Come — please — right after the show? Please, Carter . . . Promise?"

"All right, I'll come."

Carter O'Connor escorted her to the main temple entrance, then hurried back to his car.

His sharp eyes swept back across the temple garden as he drove away. Again there was a streak of orange light showing at the narrow little inset door to the temple's lower level.

"That devil of a Slack Clampitt!" he muttered to himself. "What's his tie-up with the Temple Hotel?"

CARTER cruised twice around a wide circular drive that enclosed the Temple Hotel grounds. At last he spied a police officer crossing the driveway.

The uniformed man was probably going off duty, thought Carter; maybe the fellow would accept a lift.

Carter called to him.

The policeman shook his head and trudged on.

"Officer!" Carter called.

"What's wanted?" The man in the

brown uniform came out to the car reluctantly. By the growing daylight, Carter could see at a glance that the man was not Siamese, Chinese. He was partly Jap; perhaps a mixture of all three. His uniform, however, appeared to be official Bangkok. Carter decided to take a chance.

"How soon can you get a squad of men?" Carter snapped. "There's a killer lurking in this neighborhood."

"Not so fast," said the officer in a clinking Oriental dialect. "Who's been killed?"

"One of my men, a night ago, out on one of the highways—"

"A night ago, and you're just now reporting?"

"I reported yesterday noon. But—"

"Then go back to bed. The police will handle it."

"But I'm trying to tell you, the man's hiding out right over there in the Temple Hotel. I saw him start to come out. If you get a squad right away, he's trapped."

"Highly irregular," said the little officer apathetically. "How do I know you're not drunk or crazy? What are you doing around here this time of night?"

"I just brought someone back to the hotel, and this slippery devil happened to show his face—"

"Come on, show me where you saw him. Lock your car. We'll go on foot."

They crossed the lavender shadows from the tall trees through the garden. The electric lights were dimming against the daylit skies.

"Come along close to the wall," said the policeman. "If anyone should step out, you tell me—by the way, where is that door you spoke of?"

"Straight ahead."

The officer crowded the wall, Carter walked along on the outside, just beneath the low dipping eaves.

"Hold it," said the officer.

Carter stopped.

At that instant he heard a rustle overhead, and a form came bounding down upon him. He was knocked flat, and both the officer and the eaves crawler pounced upon him with flying fists.

The black-suited man from overhead was considerably larger and heavier than the fake officer. Both men were quick and athletic, and there was more than a suggestion of jiu jitsu in their manner of attack.

CARTER'S feet kicked out in time, however, to hurl the fake officer back across the sidewalk. There was a swift moment, then, in which his only adversary was the thick-set man in black, who by this time was raising his arm to catch something out of the air.

In that interval between fist blows and weapons, Carter reared upward and struck the big man with such an uppercut that the fellow went reeling back against the wall. The gun which some hidden third party had thrown him spilled out of his fingers.

Carter dived for it. Black-suit kicked it out of his grasp, and the weapon went clattering down the short stairway toward the narrow lower-level door.

Then a third man swung down from the eaves, pounced squarely on Carter's shoulders, and hung on like a demon.

Carter whirled. He was aware that there could be gun play within a few seconds. If he couldn't land two or three cold knockouts at once, he might go the way of the luckless Heavy. He had no appetite for being murdered in cold blood. If there was killing to be done, he preferred to give rather than receive.

He bounced the back-hanger off his

shoulder with a terrific swing, and the attacker went rolling out into the street.

Even in the rush of fighting, Carter gave a second flash of thought to the way that rolling body behaved. Not like a dead body. Anything but. The attacker rolled back off the driveway as if it had been a hot stove.

There was something significant in that action. It proved that there was a complete plan at work among these thugs. And the developments of the next moment proved as much. A truck came roaring around the driveway.

Its headlights were off. Its driver was scrunched down in his seat. The monster came on at high speed.

Then it was that three or four more figures came rushing up out of the basement doorway brandishing guns. The other attackers were piling in again from the opposite direction. Carter's one apparent opening was to race across the driveway—

But could he make it ahead of the truck?

Not if they could help it. The right front wheel was meant for him.

He struck out at the man who was crowding down on him hardest. Then, without a split second of faltering, he sprang, caught the overhead eave, and swung himself up.

Three of the men were right after him. At any rate, three hands caught over the edge of the eave simultaneously. But Carter's fingers had already found a loose chunk of tile. He hammered down one, two, three, like rapid notes on an anvil. The hands slipped off.

He rushed up the steep tiled roofside.

He expected to be shot in the back.

But no shots sounded. He knew, then, that the guns had been bluff. The Temple Hotel's underworld wanted no gun murders. Business was too well entrenched. All they wanted was a hit-and-run job to get him out of the way; just a safe and sound little maneuver to make sure that Slack Clampitt wouldn't be sought out and turned over to the authorities.

BY THE time he reached the ridgepole of one wing of the temple building, he could hear the clamor of excited voices below, both male and female. The whole guest-list of the hotel must have been aroused by the noises. One loud voice was bellowing to everyone to get back inside.

"There's a dangerous criminal on the roof!"

Others cried for the police. In another minute the whole situation was taking a new turn, and Carter O'Connor faced a danger he hadn't counted on.

"If he's a dangerous criminal," someone yelled, *"shoot him down!* Don't let him get away!"

Evidently the gang of thugs below was also embarrassed by finding that their game of hit-and-run had suddenly become a public affair. As Carter glanced downward he failed to see the fake officer and the man in black; they had gone into hiding in a hurry.

But the truck continued spinning around the temple with such speed that Carter knew it was still out for blood. No doubt the driver had had a last-second order to stay on the trail and ride the victim down.

It was the crowd of hotel guests who distracted the driver into slowing down, as if to stop.

Carter was waiting for that to happen. He slid down the title roof like a toboggan. He leaped from the eave, straight for the retarding truck cab, and landed on his toes. The onlookers screamed.

He swung himself down into the left

window, head and shoulders first, nearly scaring the life out of the driver. The rest was easy. One punch knocked the driver cold, and Carter was in the seat, steering for the outer street where he had left his car.

"Thanks for the lift, pal," he said to the dizzy truck driver as he parked.

Another swift jump and he was spinning away in his own roadster, well ahead of the sirens of the city's motorcycle police.

CHAPTER XVII

Help—Too Late

IN THE offices of the Bangkok city government that afternoon one of the older and wiser of the city's specialized trouble shooters shook his head sadly over the state of civic affairs.

"Please, no more interviews today," the Siamese official said.

"But your honor, Carter O'Connor, the American road builder, is waiting."

"O'Connor? That's different. Send him in."

The secretary bowed and stepped out to the lobby. "Mr. Seemo is ready, Mr. O'Connor."

Carter O'Connor had walked through this elaborately carved doorway many times before. But today, as he caught the reflection of his haggard face in the polished tile walls he felt as if the weight of all the building materials in Siam were on his back.

"Welcome, Mr. O'Connor. Please sit down. Here is a newspaper. I'll talk with you in a moment."

Carter returned Seemo's cordial greeting and sat down to scan the headlines.

Seemo phoned to the finance department and began making arrangements for additional funds for the O'Connor Road Project.

"We'll have a report yet this afternoon—"

"Thanks, but that wasn't what I came in for, Mr. Seemo."

"No?"

"I'm surprised to find no mention in the paper—it must have been suppressed at the source. I got into an ugly jam this morning, and I think you'd like to hear about it."

"Go right ahead, Mr. O'Connor."

Carter told his story. He began with George Wilmington, who had gotten the map that once belonged to John How. He told of Slack Clampitt's thieving the letter containing this information.

He proceeded with the quarrel between Clampitt and Heavy, as witnessed by Yolanda Lavelle, and the resulting murder.

"Just when or how Slack Clampitt attached himself to the city's underworld element, I don't know," said Carter. "He's not one to take on friends. But he had a basement gang lined up to protect him at the Temple Hotel this morning."

"It would seem," said Seemo, "that he might be the only one who knows that your friend Wilmington is on his way to this country with a valuable map."

"Almost the only one," said Carter. "But the Siamese hypnotist, Tolozell, is here again—also located at the new Temple Hotel. I'm sure he'll be laying for George Wilmington, too."

"When do you expect Wilmington to arrive?"

"Any day," said Carter. "Probably not later than the last of this week."

"You've told me before of George Wilmington and his break with Tolozell," said the officer. "Now it would appear that the hypnotist and your deserter, Clampitt, are playing the same game."

"But together or separately?"

"That remains to be seen," said Seemo. "All I can say is that they're playing for big stakes. The Jap Imperialists no doubt realize that there's a treasury of billions waiting somewhere."

THE official rummaged through some papers and found a dust smeared mimeographed page full of impressive figures.

"Here's the last record of the Chiam treasury totals to be printed. John How issued this statement for the society soon after the war. You'll notice that there is no information which would be of any use to the Japanese Imperialists—or other thieves."

"Except the totals! They're staggering!" Carter gasped.

"And of course matters like that could never be kept a secret. It was wise of your father to hustle John How off to America. The game of grab was too hot over here, and the way the anarchists were going he'd never have lived the year out. But we're digressing. On with your story, O'Connor."

Carter told of his brief and rather disconcerting conference with Yolanda Lavelle, who *might* have among her possessions whatever official documents or other information that John How chose to leave to the world.

"A strange confidante for the long line of the Chiam's scientific secrets," Seemo commented.

"Wait till you see Yolanda," said Carter.

Finally he described in detail his early morning glimpse of Slack Clampitt and the swift-action trap that Clampitt's protectors set off, complete with a fake policeman and a well-planned hit-and-run act.

The Siamese trouble shooter took it all in to the last detail.

"The wonder is," he said, "that we haven't had more outbreaks of violence. There's a seething mess of trouble that we can't break into. It keeps at work under a surface of innocence. This Temple Hotel, for example. The purchase was on the up-and-up. Everything has the appearance of being legal."

Seemo took time out to make a telephone inquiry. He returned to his conversation with Carter shaking his head bitterly.

"There you have it. The Temple Hotel has complained that there was some mysterious disturbance of the peace early this morning, and the management would like us to provide plenty of police protection until the scare is over."

"That's brass!" Carter muttered. "What will you do?"

"If we can spare any extra protection," said Seemo decisively, "we'll send it to the train stations and airports to protect your friend Wilmington. If he carries a treasure map, he's a marked man."

The officer executed his decision at once, phoning the necessary orders to the squad cars' headquarters.

"I leave it to you, O'Connor, to see that the man comes into our hands as soon as Wilmington arrives. You do trust him?"

"He knows enough to take my advice," said Carter. "You'll also help us locate Yolanda Lavelle?"

THE officer gave his reassurance. Yolanda's testimony would be needed on the murder case. And above all, any Chiam secrets she might bear must be saved. That, again, would call for Carter's cooperation, since she was more likely to share confidence with him than anyone.

"Finally," Seemo said, "I advise you

have your dancer friend change to another hotel before she involves you in further troubles."

"She's already moved." Carter explained that a phone message had come for him at the camp late that morning. "She sent me word that there had been a mysterious outburst of trouble at the Temple. So she picked up her things and left."

Ten minutes after Carter O'Connor concluded his interview and went on his way, more tragic news was brought into the offices of the Bangkok city police.

A murder had been committed in a taxi at the chief airport.

The taxi driver had been knocked out cold.

The murder victim, seated in the rear, had been identified as one George Wilmington, just arrived on a big air liner. He had been shot squarely through the heart, and robbed.

The job had been swift and daring, and the bold murderer had made a clean getaway.

CHAPTER XVIII

Where's the Map?

LATE that night inside one of the lower level rooms of the Temple Hotel a single Japanese lantern burned.

It was a dingy red and blue paper lantern, salvaged from some long forgotten festival. It hung over an orange light bulb on a drop cord that trailed across the cobwebby ceiling.

Tolozell slowly paced the dusty stone floor like a lazy but sure-footed tiger. His hulking muscular body never betrayed the quick agitation of his mind; he was the well-poised showman even when summoning his energies for a high-pressure drive.

The other man in the room was Jeff Cotton. He stood with one foot on the edge of an empty wooden crate; his left wrist rested on one of the pyramids of empty boxes piled in that corner of the room. There one of the brighter shafts from the dim light fell upon his wristwatch. He watched the hands move toward two, and his fingers tapped nervously.

"He ought to be here," said Jefferson Cotton.

"He must have got on Wilmington's trail, or he would be here," Tolozell said. "Everything's clear for him to come in."

"That's the devil of it," said Cotton impatiently. "We've gone to no end of trouble to protect him. He'll end up by doing more harm than good. I thought we were gonna keep this job clean."

"He'll be here," said Tolozell confidently.

But Jeff Cotton was gathering up for an explosion. He always blew off to relieve himself of the jitters; but that malady had steadily grown on him since his career with Tolozell began.

"You told me when I lined up with you that we'd sweep in this swag without cutting any throats, damn it."

"Shut up!"

"And look how many years we've been at it, hot-footing it all over America—"

Tolozell snapped his fingers, and his front man broke off talking.

"Stop your drooling." Tolozell's voice was a low, threatening growl. "We're almost over the hump. Everything's lined up, and I don't need to remind you the stakes are dozens of years of a man's life—your life, anyway. In a few minutes the map will be in our hands."

"Will it?" Cotton muttered weakly.

"I know you don't trust this man Slack. I don't either. But I'm banking

on his ignorance. He doesn't know what time of day it is most of the time. He's a good sneak man. He's had his first taste of murder, and he knows it's in his blood. He's not backing up, he's plunging."

"If the police nab him, what'll he say?"

"Nothing. I've taken care of that," said Tolozell confidently. "I gave him the stoutest post-hypnotic suggestion I ever gave any man. If he finds George Wilmington, he'll lift every possession the man has and bring it straight to us. He won't even examine the stuff."

"I hope."

"Why should he, as long as he knows nothing? I hired the man because we needed a desperado; and your talents unfortunately are limited to running hotels and circulating handbills. Now let's have less of the squawk out of you, and a little more— Say, what about the police reports? Do you still have someone picking them up for us?"

"Reporting every thirty minutes. There hasn't been a thing all day."

"What about that Lavelle girl? Have they located her yet?"

"Not yet."

"Well, at least we've paved the way on that deal," said Tolozell. "We've put ourselves across with her dancer friend."

"The dancer's friend's not one-hundred percent friend."

"What do you mean?"

"She's been talking to her friends, this Knight gal—and she spilled a mess of lowdown on Yolanda Lavelle."

"Give," said Tolozell.

Jefferson Cotton related what he had heard of Yolanda's peculiarities: her implicit belief in her own paper dolls; her strange notion that she could swerve the fortunes of the people those dolls represented.

Tolozell began to smile.

"I knew my hunch was right," he said, "when I got her to come over from America."

COTTON looked at him questioningly. "I can't remember that you did so well with her the one time you meant to hypnotize her. At that time you figured you'd plant trouble between her and John How, so he couldn't pass on his secrets."

"Right. Luckily, things took a different turn. Now we know that if anyone in the world has his secrets, she's it. With Slack to recover the map and her to give us How's own interpretation —Jeff?"

"Huh?"

"Let's see the sole of your shoe."

"Why?"

"Did you make those dust tracks along that wall? . . . Huh? . . . Who comes to this inner room besides us?"

Both men stared at the heap of boxes, trying to determine whether any of them had been recently moved, or whether any of them might be occupied.

"Now who's getting the jitters," Jeff Cotton jibed. "Listen!"

A low whistle from an adjoining room shifted their attention.

"That's Slack. Let's move to the next room—yeah, and lock this door, just to be on the safe side."

Jeff reached up into the Japanese lantern and snapped the light. He followed Tolozell into the adjoining room, and neither of them could know that Carter O'Connor's eyes followed them.

The heavy wooden door squeaked as Jeff drew it closed behind him. He locked it securely and hurried to rejoin Tolozell.

"Right here will do, Slack," said Tolozell, motioning the tall spare man to a seat by the wall. "Leave the light off, Jeff. There's enough from the hall yon-

der. But keep out of the gleam. These basement windows have been boarded up about as solid as a sieve."

The three men seated themselves on the inverted urns and flower-pots, and Tolozell placed another urn, solid end up, for a table within their circle.

They were situated well out of reach of the slice of light that knifed in from the basement hallway, and Tolozell was content that this was as private as the center of the earth. He motioned to the makeshift table.

"Give."

Slack hadn't uttered a word up to this time; he was breathing hard and there was ominous grimness in his gaunt features.

"Here's what remains," he said, "of George Wilmington."

He poured out the contents of a cloth money bag. A coin purse, a bill-fold, and some miscellaneous papers spilled forth.

"There he is."

"What do you mean?" Jeff Cotton snapped. "Good God, you didn't kill him?"

"I had my orders," said Slack Clampitt coldly.

JEFF fairly leaped. "*Whose* orders? I thought—"

"Sit down!" Tolozell barked. "What do you think I hired this man for? To give tea parties to your hotel guests? Where'd it happen, Slack?"

"In a taxi pulling away from the airport. Hell, the radios shoulda had it hours ago. Funny you hadn't heard about it."

"They'll pour in on us," Jeff wailed. "Let's get out."

It was several moments before Jeff Cotton could be quieted. He insisted that there was no sense in drawing fire from the authorities.

"Shut up," Tolozell warned. "I told you we were going to put this job over, no matter what it cost."

"But, hell, this business of jerkin' a murderer in on the deal at the last minute—"

Jeff Cotton didn't finish. The long arm of Slack Clampitt knifed out like a jumping shadow, and Cotton took it on the jaw. He fell backward amid a heap of broken flower pots. He lay rubbing his face, brushing his ruffled blond hair out of his eyes.

Meanwhile Tolozell worked through the papers on the make-shift table. When he finished he glared up at the lean-faced hireling.

"Where is it?"

"Where's what?" Slack Clampitt retorted.

"You know what."

"It's all right there," said Slack, still breathing tensely.

"Come on, don't give us that. We didn't send you out to get a man for his measly travellers' checks. You know what was back of my orders. George Wilmington probably knew it by heart, that's why we couldn't let him live. But I know him to well to believe he'd destroy it. Fork over that map."

"I think you're crazy," said Slack Clampitt coldly. "You hired me to do a job. I did it, just like you said. Now you're tryin' to back out of payin' me. I don't like dealin' with your kind. Give me my money and I'll go."

BY THAT time Jeff Cotton was on his feet. His fists were tight, his eyes full of rage.

"Sit down, Jeff," said Tolozell. "This man's right. He's carried out his end. We've got no complaint."

"I'll take my money and go," Slack Clampitt repeated.

Tolozell didn't cavil, but promptly counted out a quantity of paper certificates.

"You'll get away safely, I hope," Tolozell concluded. "Remember, if you need any protection, we're well fixed here."

"I found that out last night," Slack said sarcastically. "Nobody hangin' around your doors but harmless guys like Carter O'Connor."

"What's he to you?" Jeff spoke up abruptly.

Slack shrugged and made no answer. Tolozell pressed him with a penetrating glare, but only for a moment.

The Siamese hypnotist turned to Jeff, and one of his sullen drooping eyes narrowed.

"Are we lined up for that next job, Jeff? Maybe we could assign it to this man, too."

"Maybe he doesn't want it," said Jeff, not too sure what the next move would be.

Slack Clampitt was on the alert. "I'll take your risks for you. What's next?"

"There's a girl to be taken out of circulation. Show girl named Katherine Knight. Ever hear of her?"

"Yes," said Slack Clampitt.

"Okay, that's your next assignment," said Tolozell. "She checked out of here today. It's up to you to find out where she went and handle the job so we can hang it on a jealous girl friend. How soon can you manage?"

"As soon as you give me all the dope," said Slack.

CHAPTER XIX

Missing: Carter and Katherine

WHEN the Bangkok officers found Yolanda straggling along the highway carrying the dusty blue leather suitcase they scored the first victory for the Chiams that had occurred in many a year. A victory of hope. For by this time the information dropped by Carter O'Connor had spread like fire.

Yolanda couldn't understand why she should be accorded such exaggerated courtesies. She felt sure that she looked like a forsaken tramp by now, it had been so long since she'd done anything but hike along the highway searching for the little stone lantern tower where she'd left this precious suitcase.

"You are beautiful American girl who knew John How," one of the officers kept saying.

His comical repetition of the word beautiful was interesting. She hadn't had much chance to think of matters of beauty.

In fact, she had wandered an extra four or five miles out into the wilderness of low jungle, the day previous, in search of water for drinking and washing. An old stone and iron water tower at the edge of the farmlands had attracted her.

The Chiam Dolls had led her on.

But upon reaching the little community of peasants' homes she found herself unable to converse with anyone except by means of gestures. And when she kept pointing to the stately water tower, the quaint, friendly people at last caught on, shook their heads sadly, and directed her to the river still farther on.

Only there, amid a sprawling city of flatboats, had she been able, after a fashion, to refresh herself.

Then she had been persuaded, by the funny gestures of these friendly, simple toilers, that it was too much for her to walk back to Bangkok that evening. A family had taken her in, fed her, and given her the best bed in the house; and this morning had sent her on her way refreshed.

From that adventure she had gained

a new appreciation of old John How's faith in these natives.

The two policemen now accompanying her were earnest in their compliments, and they kept smiling at her admiringly.

"Maybe you bring people message of John How on Chiam Day?"

This plan, suggested by the police escort, was formally presented when she was conducted into the office of Mr. Seemo.

"Since I talked with Mr. O'Connor," Seemo said, smiling pleasantly, "I have had magnificent ideas. Each year with the approach of Chiam Day our loyal ones, whose forefathers taught them that Chiam was the most wonderful society in the world, linger about the market places and public squares with sadness in their eyes. They are still waiting, hoping, that the common bonds which once held them together are not all gone. Would you give them something this year?"

"But what have I to give?" Yolanda asked. "I am a stranger, a foreigner—"

"If you would only talk to them—tell them a few things you remember of John How—"

YOLANDA trembled. "No, I could not. Even if I could bear to speak of him without choking from tears, I wouldn't dare. That is—he told me too much—and there are enemies."

Seemo accepted her refusal tentatively. But he was disappointed.

"You will be grieved when you see the streets fill with the peasants from the country far and wide. There will be people from the rivers who live in houseboats. They will feel great sadness because the homes and farms which the Chiam treasury might have brought them some day are now empty dreams.

"And the peasant farmers who carry water from the rivers; they too will be heavy in spirit. There was a time when they were near to receiving running water in their homes. A few of the towers were built, and a few of the homes were already supplied. But the treasury of the Chiams had to be hidden and the blessings which their gold had earned were flown.

"Again, there are countless ones who await the highways; and some, the fortunate few, are realizing their dreams because such benefactors as our friend Mr. O'Connor have gone ahead upon their own generosity. But even these must soon cease their work until money comes."

"Can't there be taxes?" Yolanda asked innocently.

"Every day there are underground whispers that taxes should never be paid, because the native societies are powerless to build. There are underground whispers that only the Japanese Imperialists will be able to give the people the benefits they need. And so the confusion paralyzed the rightful economic managers, and only fear and doubt remain.

"And so, Miss Lavelle, if you think these people deserve a tiny reminder of the glories that were almost theirs—"

"I'm sure they deserve it, but—"

"If you should change your mind and decide to do something for them—"

The challenge brought a feverish heat to Yolanda's cheeks. But she knew that this officer meant no insult. He couldn't know that she was already trying, with all her strength and loyalty, to do something big for John How's honest followers.

"I'll consult with Carter O'Connor," she said, "before I give you my decision."

"Do you know where he is?" The officer betrayed worry.

"I supposed he was at work on his

highway," said Yolanda.

"One moment, please," Seemo picked up a phone. "Hello. . . . Have you been able to locate Carter O'Connor? . . . Not yet? . . . If any clue turns up, please call me at once."

"Where—where is he?" Yolanda gasped.

"I'm very sorry to say, nobody knows. He talked with me yesterday. Today he is gone."

YOLANDA reached into her blue leather purse and brought forth a bright little doll—a Chiam model, from the White Paper Wand. She laid it on the officer's desk.

"Mr. How used to make dolls like this," she said. "I thought you might like to see one before I go, Mr. Seemo."

The officer picked it up, regarded it, laid it down. It was so very simple that it did not attract his curiosity half so much as Yolanda Lavelle's blue eyes intent upon him.

"Thank you. I trust you to find Carter O'Connor, Mr. Seemo."

Then she picked up the doll and left.

A taxi was waiting outside and she entered and asked to be taken to a hotel. Which one? The one where she would find Katherine Knight, the current theatrical star.

"Temple Hotel, Miss." The driver turned to give her a curious look. "I guess it's okay, Miss. You look like you're on the right side."

"I don't understand."

"I mean, you're not a member of the Japanese Imperialists or anything like that?"

"Certainly not." How absurd, Yolanda thought, for a driver who looked so much like a Japanese himself to be suspicious of her.

"They've been having a little trouble, Miss, at the Temple, the same as they do at any hotel from time to time. Please don't be offended if they ask some sharp questions."

At the hotel they did ask sharp questions; that is, the large blond manager did. But he was apparently an American; in fact, she had the strange feeling that she had met him before somewhere. But the name, Jefferson Cotton, was not familiar.

"If you're through questioning me," she said, "I must ask you one before I sign the register. I'm very anxious to see Katherine Knight, an old friend. She is staying here, isn't she?"

"Certainly, by all means," said Jefferson Cotton. "One of our most popular customers. One moment and I'll give you her room number."

"It isn't necessary. Just tell her, when she comes by, that an old friend —"

"Not Miss Lavelle? . . . Indeed! . . . Splendid! I know Miss Knight has been wondering about you. You're an artist, aren't you—and a stage designer?"

"Well, I—"

"You needn't be modest about it, Miss Lavelle. Katherine Knight has already praised you to the skies. And fortunately, I have good news. The deal has gone through. She had signed up with the new theater group, the wealthiest on this side of the world. So I'm sure she'll press you into service right away—"

YOLANDA was naturally dazzled by this rapid-fire success talk. The manager declared that he wasn't really letting the cat out of the bag, because everyone around here knew; that is, all the show folks. And there wasn't a question but what Yolanda Lavelle would be able to qualify for the designing job—

"Though of course Miss Knight and all the others are anxious to see your

work on exhibition. In fact, we've arranged to rope off the south half of the lobby for your famous paper dolls."

"Why—why—I can hardly believe it. I mean, things are coming true so fast. I didn't know—"

Yolanda fingered her purse, and there was a moment's impulse to hand a gleaming Chiam doll to this voluble manager. But the news was so overwhelming that she couldn't manage everything at once; and now her foremost impulse was to see Katherine as quickly as possible, and to assure herself that all the misunderstandings between them had been swept aside.

"Mr. Cotton, is Katherine Knight in now? May I call her at once?"

"Certainly, certainly. The room is—oh-oh, what's this?" Jefferson Cotton's manner changed as abruptly as if it had been a practiced bit of stage business. He had taken a message from one of the pigeon-holes, and he read it two or three times. Then: "You've already seen Miss Knight?"

"No."

"According to this, she informed our telephone operator last night that she would not return after the show as she was spending the night with you."

"How could she? I wasn't even in the city."

The manager shrugged, and began eyeing Yolanda with cool suspicion.

At that moment the telephone operator broke in on the discussion to state that Katherine Knight hadn't been seen all day. The theater had called for her repeatedly, trying to secure her for a rehearsal. But no one could find her.

CHAPTER XX

Paper Doll Party

YOLANDA came down from her room that evening to find her artistic paper dolls on display in the Temple Hotel lobby. The place was a riot of color and design.

"Have we placed them to your satisfaction, Miss Lavelle?" the hotel attendants asked solicitously, removing the last of the dolls from the suitcase. "Everyone is raving about your remarkable art work, Miss Lavelle." "Even the city's fashion designers, Miss Lavelle—" "Yes, indeed, Mis Lavelle, they have already come. Those important looking gentlemen over in the corner." "Have they your permission to take notes, Miss Lavelle?"

At once the people were crowding around her to compliment her work. Who they were, whether they were guests of the hotel, or officials of theaters, or some strange breed of professional complimenters, Yolanda had no time to discover.

If only she could have passed a little Chiam Doll among them!

"Thank you all so much," she gasped. "But, please—which of you is the official that Katherine Knight wished me to see?"

"He hasn't come yet," someone volunteered. "He sent word by Mr. Tolozell, the hypnotist, that he might be quite late. An hour or two after the theaters close, at least."

"Here's Mr. Tolozell, now," someone else said. "He'll give you the information, Miss Lavelle."

Then, before Yolanda had time to invent an escape, Tolozell was before her, smiling as effectively as his sullen brutal face was capable of smiling.

He offered his hand, and she felt herself being swept in by his questionable graces.

"So you are the wonderful Miss Lavelle," he said in a loud voice that made all the onlookers hush. "This is indeed a pleasure."

"But of course you do remember

me?" Yolanda knew that he did, of course. He couldn't have forgotten!

"No, I've never had the pleasure, Miss Lavelle—"

"But I was with Katherine Knight the evening you gave your performance in my town—you know—"

Tolozell bowed deeply. "Ah, so you have seen one of my performances. I hope I made a good impression. I am really a great hypnotist, Miss Lavelle," he said laughingly, turning to the crowd for their acknowledgement. "Am I not the greatest?"

Guests, hotel attendants, mysterious Orientals with no particular excuse for being here except to glorify the great—all of these applauded Tolozell's boasts with an enthusiastic outburst. It was enough to make Yolanda wonder if she was, after all, in the presence of the world's greatest showmen.

It was a trick, thought Yolanda, angering.

It was all a frame-up to break down her resistance to the man she had every reason to hate.

And she would prove it, before this farce went any farther. She reached into her purse to get a Chiam doll.

AT THAT particular moment, however, something very disturbing broke in upon her train of thoughts.

Two men in police uniforms stepped into the circle very abruptly and asked for a private word with her. She went with them willingly, and they led her to one side of the spacious arch formed by the curved back of an ornamental green dragon.

"Miss Lavelle, we have orders to inquire whether you will tell us where you have left Miss Knight."

"Left her? But I haven't seen her."

"Last night you—"

The uniformed man who started to speak was hushed by a very obvious nudge from his uniformed twin; the two of them exchanged understanding nods, and the spokesman concluded, "That's all, Miss Lavelle, for this time. But you understand you're to stay right here in the hotel—"

"What's this all about?" Yolanda demanded. "Where *is* Katherine Knight?"

"When she is found," said the officer in an accusing tone, "you'll be among the first to hear about it."

They whirled to go.

"Wait!" Yolanda cried, at the same time dropping a bright Chiam doll to the floor. As the uniformed men turned back to her she pointed to the doll. "If you please, I dropped it—"

"Don't touch it," one of the men hissed. "He might be after our fingerprints!"

The two uniformed men hurried off.

"Miss Lavelle!"

Yolanda whirled, wondering what dreadful thing might descend upon her next. Facing her was the large blond hotel manager, Jefferson Cotton.

"I find there was a package left for you by Miss Knight before she went out yesterday. Here. Shall I help you open it, or—"

"I'll go to my room, thank you."

It was a tremendous relief to be away from that mad crowd, thought Yolanda, closing herself in her room. In her heart she was thankful to Katherine Knight for the package, whatever it might be, if only because it took her out of the menacing shadow of Tolozell.

How could Katherine be so trusting as to accept the friendship of such a treacherous creature? Yolanda had often pondered this matter. She knew that there was a solid value to hypnotism itself, when used by competent psychiatrists and doctors for certain types of cases. Well, perhaps Katherine had been one of those so-called neurotic persons, highly suggestible.

PERHAPS Katherine had needed just that extra ounce of initiative which Tolozell's hypnotic suggestions had provided; without it she might never have overcome her fears and lack of confidence.

Yolanda opened the package and lifted the beautiful jeweled costume from it.

"Gorgeous! The loveliest, the most daring, the most glittering gown I ever saw."

The note was typewritten, even Katherine's signature. It was a brief and highly impersonal hint that the paper doll party must be a success; the big theater magnate must be won over. He would not be won by paper dolls alone, but also by the personal beauty of the artist; hence this gown, given by a friend, passed on to Yolanda by "your loving friend, Katherine."

Yolanda, dressed in her new finery, paused before the mirror for a long breathless moment. In her softly curved hand was the White Paper Wand that John How had given her. Its brightness was a perfect match for her radiant new costume. How like a fairy princess she was!

But she turned away from the mirror a little angry with herself.

"There's not time to be sentimental about bright jewels. The party is waiting. For Katherine's sake I must—"

Her fingers pressed to her lips. What could have become of Katherine? Would she be down there waiting now? Or had something dreadful happened?

And what of Carter O'Connor? Was there any cause to be worried over his strange disappearance?

The terrors of a few nights previous flooded back upon Yolanda as she wended her way toward the stairs. Over the balcony she could see the fairyland of paper dolls swaying gently from wires. Her world! And yet it would all be meaningless if anything had happened to her dearest friends.

If only she had kept that paper doll of Carter O'Connor! To have it in her possession—and again the old superstitions swept in with full force!—she could surely help protect him *by protecting the doll of him!*

Fresh courage and confidence came to her with the thought.

For she did have the paper doll of Katherine Knight!

There it hung, as pretty a cut-out of a dancing girl as any artist ever looked upon.

Very well, Katherine Knight must be safe, in spite of those dark hints from suspicious-looking officers.

With these assurances, Yolanda descended the stairs in a calm and determined mood. Had not some unknown powers of magic come into her life during those past years with Jolly John?

Very well, she would put her utmost trust in those powers; she would not be the victim of any overwhelming trickery, but a wielder of the destinies of others.

Even as she told herself these things, she was aware that the lights in the hotel lobby were being dimmed. And then, as she reached the bottom step, the whole floor was enveloped in deep, penetrating, almost tangible blue.

Rows of blue ceiling floodlights sent streams of blue down upon the circus of paper dolls.

Blue footlights blazed upward like shafts of a silent blue fountain.

At once this riot of Yolanda's favorite color began playing a game with her will power. A game of melting, softening.

THE soft blue glowed weirdly from the array of gems in her gorgeous gown. Now, as never before, she was aware of the many mirrors with which

this enchanting lobby was walled.

This fairyland as unspeakably lovely —yes, and she was lovely, too. She couldn't help knowing it.

But where was everyone?

The one lonely looking person sauntering across the carpeted floor was Tolozell; and his casual manner and subdued voice somehow did not jar as violently against the softness of the scene as Yolanda might have expected.

"There's something about blue lights," he said, "especially *this* blue. It makes things almost luminous."

"It is rather nice," said Yolanda. "Do they often light the lobby this way?"

"Only at the very late hours, after most of the people have retired. Unfortunately, the average person doesn't catch the strong magnetism from colors that you and I do."

"Won't the other people be coming back this evening?" Yolanda asked. There were only the two or three attendants, circulating among the hallways farther on.

"The guests understood that there was to be a conference of a more or less private nature. I suggested that if they would come back tomorrow they might see a paper doll of me among your collection. Would you be so kind?"

"Are you sure you want me to make a representation of you?" Yolanda said. There was a little catch in her throat. "You might not guess it, but my paper dolls have been known to carry certain powers all their own."

"Wonderful," said Tolozell. "Please do a cut-out of me and bestow upon me all the virtues you think I should have."

The evil sullen face seemed a trifle softened under the dim light. Yolanda impulsively gave her decision.

"Please sit there and think of those virtues you want most," she said. "I'll make a doll of you before you know it. I have only this paper, but it will do."

The hypnotist posed, and Yolanda unrolled a rectangle of paper from the White Wand and went to work.

A FEW minutes later Yolanda hung the latest addition to her collection at the end of the paper doll string. It was a simple representation, with features done in brief bold strokes.

"A pleasant pastime, Miss Lavelle, making me virtuous?"

"I am glad to do a good turn for anyone who really needs it," Yolanda said.

In the semi-darkness she could imagine that Tolozell, standing beside the bright paper representation of himself, actually might grow to resemble its line of virtue.

But would that be possible? She wondered.

She was sitting in a soft, comfortable chair, now, musing upon this matter, wondering whether such a dream was within the range of her unknown powers.

The strain of the swift art work under the dim light had left her fatigued.

Tolozell was apparently occupied with studying the paper symbol of himself. His presence was no longer a disturbance to her mind. He was still talking, but she was too much relaxed, all at once, to pay much attention.

The hypnotist's low drawn-out words were in a soothing monotone. Yolanda felt strangely sleepy as she listened to the continuous hum of his voice. "A very *pleasing* picture, Miss Lavelle. Yes, very pleeeeasing, indeeeeeeeed. You weeeeesh me to beeee a man of goooood deeeeeds. So pleeeeeasinnnng. Pleeeeeasinnnng."

Yolanda made no answer.

"Pleeeasing . . . Yes, indeeeeeeeed."

A stupor engulfed her. She seemed to be fading away, as if under the influence of ether.

A twinge of responsibility caught in her dwindling consciousness. She glanced down beside her. Yes, the White Paper Wand was still leaning against the arm of her chair, its silver knob hanging in her limp curved fingers. The scissors lay on the floor in front of her. She drew a long, quiet breath.

"An eeeasy tiiiiime to sleeeeeeeep."

The knob of the wand slipped from her hand . . . but it was all right . . . no clattering from its fall . . . someone must have caught it.

Then a sharp voice: "Now *try* to sleep! You must try. Put all your energies into *trying!*"

CHAPTER XXI

Hypnotic Trickery

"YOU are very good at cutting paper dolls, Yolanda," said Tolozell.

"Yes," said Yolanda dreamily. "John How taught me."

"Here is a piece of paper. The scissors are in your hand. Go ahead and cut a nice little design for me."

Yolanda's hands moved a little. "But the scissors are gone out of my hands."

"No—they are in your hands. Don't you feel them? They're the very scissors you're used to." Tolozell placed the scissors in her hands. "Now go ahead."

"I don't see very well."

"Listen to me and you'll see perfectly . . . I have a piece of tape that I want you to cut for me . . . Here it is. Cut please."

Yolanda made a motion with the scissors, though there was nothing to catch their blades.

"There," she said. "I have cut it."

"Good. I have a few questions for you, Yolanda. Whatever I ask you will answer. What is your age?"

"Eighteen."

"Are you in love?"

"Yes, very much."

"Who is the man?"

"Carter O'Connor."

"Do you expect to marry him?"

"I'm afraid he will marry someone else."

"Who?"

"Katherine Knight. They are very close friends. I think she has already won him."

"Why don't you take him away from her?"

"They are both my friends. I want them to be happy and successful."

"I am your friend, Yolanda, you may tell me anything. You may be confidential with me. Do you understand?"

Tolozell repeated the question before he got an answer. It came, a slow, hesitant, "Yes."

"You are ready to tell me your deepest secrets because I am your friend. Your very best friend."

"My best friend," said Yolanda, "is John How."

"I," said Tolozell in a low, mysterious voice, "am John How."

"No," she answered calmly. "John How is dead."

"I am John How, invisible to you, the spirit of John How hovering over you. Do you understand?"

"Yes—John. What do you want?"

"Have I told you where the treasure of the Chiams is hidden?"

"No," said Yolanda. "Tell me."

"But I have told you. You know, don't you? You haven't forgotten. Come, tell me where it is."

Tolozell breathed tensely as he waited for the answer.

"I—I don't know. You never told me. You only said—"

"Yes, go on!"

"That the White Paper Wand would lead me. That is our secret."

"Yes," Tolozell whispered. *"Our secret!"*

HE LOOKED down at the wand. A few moments before, he had caught the silver knob so that Yolanda would not be awakened by the sound of its fall.

Now he picked it up again, cunningly catching the knob in the tips of his fingers. He moved backward, keeping his eyes on the hypnotized girl.

The wand! Old Chiam magic! So it would lead him—

His other hand moved to catch the white-wrapped stalk. It was his left hand, the one with the perpetual twitch. The big stocky fingers touched the white surface.

Pffooooooossssssh!

The sphere of white flame burst from his hand. The blinding explosion filled the room for an instant, and was gone.

Gasping and choking, Tolozell ran toward the dragon arch, his hands clutching at his cheeks as if to protect the ragged black whiskers.

But the explosion was done. Everything was as quiet as before. The little trail of gray smoke, climbing into the blue ceiling lights, could barely be seen. Yolanda had not moved.

Tolozell stole back cautiously.

He picked up what remained of the wand, a silver knob on the end of a simple metal rod.

"Put it down, please," said Yolanda in a low, casual voice. "It belongs to me."

Tolozell devoted the next few minutes to restoring the quiet sleepy state in his subject. She offered no resistance, but after the violent disturbance he feared that her cooperative attitude might be at low ebb. Soon he was talking with her again, receiving very satisfactory answers.

He began to question her about the Tolozell doll she had made. Did she really believe she might do anything to improve the character of "that showman, Mr. Tolozell?"

"Mr. Tolozell is a very evil person," Yolanda replied quietly. "But my treatment of this new doll may have profound effect."

"Why is Mr. Tolozell so evil?"

"He wants to steal the vast treasures which belong to the Chiams."

"We must never let him do that," said Tolozell. "I'll help you protect those treasures from him, if you'll let me . . . I'm your friend . . . Where are the treasures hidden?"

"I don't know. Only the White Paper Wand knows. The paper will lead us."

Tolozell swore under his breath. The paper was all gone. No, there was still that damned caricature she'd made of him.

THERE it hung, awaiting his command.

The clock's hands passed from midnight to one while the Siamese hypnotist exerted his futile efforts on the white paper doll. *He did not touch it.* That lesson had been learned. But he did do virtually everything else in the way of experimenting, handling it with tongs or gloves, talking to it, saying all manner of magic incantations over it.

He hung it up again, fixing it so that it was free to slide or turn in any direction. Then he stimulated it with a variety of sounds, clinking glasses, parlor chimes, light tapping on Chinese gongs. Before he had exhausted his array of trial-and-error experiments, the hotel's attendants came into see where the weird sounds were coming from. They were followed by Jeff Cotton.

"If you've got to make all that

noise," Jeff growled, "why the hell don't you take it down to the basement?"

With that, Jeff reached for the paper doll, and it passed out of existence with a quick *poof!*

Tolozell, white with rage, cleared the blue-lighted lobby of everyone but himself and Yolanda. She was still sitting there, eyes wide open, yet apparently unconcerned by all these goings-on.

"What was that superstition you were telling me a little while ago about the paper dolls?" Tolozell began, and there was an ill-suppressed brutality in his manner. He was like a bull determined to crash something that wouldn't vanish at the touch of his horns.

"It is no superstition," said Yolanda.

"Did you see what happened to that doll of Tolozell?"

"It burned up."

"Yes, er—" Tolozell's left hand was for a moment as paralyzed as a stone. "Who do you say I am?"

"You told me that you are the invisible spirit of John How."

"That's right," said Tolozell, growing more comfortable. He drew up a chair and faced Yolanda. "You are right. Whatever happens to the doll will happen to the person. Aren't you glad that Tolozell will soon be out of the way?"

He narrowed his eyes and waited for an answer.

"Truly, I am glad," she said slowly.

"Then there is murder in your heart," he said fiercely.

"No," the girl was calm. "I have no murder in my heart. *I didn't touch the flame to the doll.*"

"Oh. So that's how it works. If you had done it—"

"Then I would no longer be trustworthy," said Yolanda.

"Now we're getting places. Ah . . . Our enemy Tolozell is gone. We've nothing more to worry about. Come, let us enjoy ourselves the rest of the evening."

"I only feel like resting," said Yolanda.

BUT a moment or two later she responded to the hypnotist's suggestion that they try some imaginary games. She preferred to cut some more paper dolls, she said, and the floor was the best place to work. So Tolozell drew her chair out of the way. But as to the games, his scheme was to get her thoughts completely away from paper dolls. If he could work it, a surefire advantage was all his.

"We are in an airplane," he said. "We are having a wonderful ride. You are at the controls."

Yolanda smiled. "I like running an airplane." She seemed to take great delight in pantomiming the pilot of a plane. "Where shall we go?"

"Down," said Tolozell. He placed the scissors in her hands. "This is the lever for controlling the power."

A moment later he brought the pretty little paper doll of a dancing girl. It was the cut-out of Katherine Knight. He said, "Here is a robe which the pilot must have to keep warm at high altitudes. Put it over your lap. There. Hold onto it with your left hand. Keep the power control in the right. Now . . . We're going down. We're about to land Cut off your power . . . *Cut it off!*"

The orders were called with such a sharp command that there was only one natural thing for the hynotized subject to do. That was to obey. With scissors in one hand and a paper doll in the other, the doll's head poised almost within the blades, Yolanda was being forced to *"Cut it off. Cut it off!"*

To Tolozell's utter surprise, Yolanda simply dropped the scissors.

"We've already landed," she said

quietly. "I cut the power off a long time ago. But wasn't it a wonderful ride?"

Tolozell didn't answer. Like a tiger that had just been beaten out of a meal he paced the floor in rage.

Suddenly he snatched up the scissors and took the Katherine Knight doll out of Yolanda's hands.

He deliberately slashed into the neck. A few jagged strokes and the head dropped to the floor at Yolanda's feet.

He placed the body of the paper doll back in her hands, also the scissors.

Something was amiss. A hypnotized subject shouldn't have done what Yolanda did then. She deliberately threw the scissors across the room.

Tolozell picked them up and started to bring them back. The girl must have them in her hands when she came out from under the hypnotic spell, and she seemed about to emerge.

At that particular instant a tremendous disturbance sounded from the front entrance of the temple, beyond the dragon-guarded archway.

The tall angular haggard looking man who came racing in was Slack Clampitt.

CHAPTER XXII

Birds of a Feather

YOLANDA didn't need to be snapped out of a spell to know what was happening now. The tall angular man who stood before her was the moonlight murderer of Heavy.

Under these dim blue lights he looked almost exactly as he had looked that night by the pagoda. The difference was the wild desperation in his face, the hunted look.

"They're on us," Slack Clampitt hissed. "They're comin' for a raid."

"You damned devil, why'd you lead them here?"

"I didn't. I broke through in time to warn you, you low skunk. I'm so in the habit of doin' your dirt for you, I risk my life—"

"All right, all right," said Tolozell in a low voice. He looked back at Yolanda, and she knew he was in a panic, for once. But he still had a card to play against her, and his game might still be won.

"You see what you did, Miss Lavelle?" he rasped. "You've been under my spell, revealing secrets right and left. You've tied yourself up in a knot —"

"You haven't learned anything from me!"

"You'd be surprised. You'd better come through with your whole murder story, so I'll know how to protect you. I *will* protect you—*if*! But you've got to tell me more about that treasure. Either that or I'll let you hang for choking your friend Katherine Knight!"

"For—*what*?"

"Don't squirm. Look, you've sheared her head off in your sleep. You did it because it's symbolical of the murderous fact. You killed her last night. You've told me. You said it was jealousy. Now!"

"Why, *you beast!*" Yolanda shrank back and ran across the hall.

Slack Clampitt had already dived into a rear room, and his rapid fire footsteps could be heard clattering down the basement steps.

That alone was reason enough for Yolanda to choose an ascent. A figure was coming down to block her way. It was the large, blond hotel manager. Strangely enough, in that split second of seeing him there, she remembered his face as it had glared in at the window of her home one wintry night, way back in America.

He was no hotel manager, he was Tolozell's assistant.

ONCE she had frightened him away with a gun. Now, with Tolozell bounding up the steps after her, shouting his threats, she chose to try her bluff again upon Jeff Cotton. She sprang forward.

He tried to catch her. She failed to dodge him on the stairs. She struck with all her force at his ankles. But he was heavy and her effort played havoc with her own balance as well as his. They went hurtling down the stairs together.

Officers were calling from the doorways, now, marching up the outer steps with an ominous tread.

In the fall down the steps, Yolanda had tried to cling to the beads of her gown, with the fear that they were being strewn all the way down. But she was mistaken. What had given her the misimpression was the fact that her fingers had closed on a precious stone during the fall.

She hid it in her clothing before anyone could notice.

Instantly Tolozell, who had dodged their fall, was in command of the situation. He caught Yolanda by the arm, jerked her to her feet, and forced her to run with him to a rear room.

Down the basement steps they went together, Yolanda fighting, Tolozell tightening the brutal grip on her arm. He seemed in no wise concerned that Jeff Cotton had dropped out of the procession. It was a hurried moment; almost a case of everyone for himself. But Tolozell was still clinging to hope that she was the one remaining key to a treasure.

Slack Clampitt could be seen at the farther side of one of the dark rooms off the hallway, working at a heavy wooden door.

"Open it up, Tolo!" he coughed. "It's the only decent lock. Get me behind it or they'll kill me."

Terrifying chills shot through Yolanda, to hear the rush of footsteps overhead. Slack's every throbbing word was like a hideous sound from the throat of a man about to be executed.

"You'd better both get in," Tolozell growled. "They're after this gal, too, for the murder of her friend."

"I've never murdered her," Yolanda cried. "I can't believe she's been murdered. And there's nothing more I can tell about that treas—"

"Hssh!"

"Please believe me."

"Get in there and think it over. I can stall 'em off if I want to."

"Can you do it for me too?" Slack Clampitt rasped, crowding in past the heavy wooden door at Tolozell opened it.

"I've paid you off, Slack," the hypnotist barked. He forced Yolanda into the room and started to shut the door. "There, you birds of a feather."

"Wait," Slack Clampitt wailed. "Promise me you'll get me outa the country safe. I'll give you anything, even the damned map."

"Map?" Tolozell crackled like close thunder. "Why, you goddamned—"

IN THE thin shaft of light Yolanda was not sure, at first, whether Tolozell had a gun. But she was sure about Slack Clampitt. He jerked a pistol to beat the hulking hypnotist.

Strangely, his arm jumped and his shot went wild.

Then fire blazed from Tolozell's hand, and the tall angular man fell like a rusty-jointed skeleton into the doorway.

"Get back, *you!*" Tolozell snarled at Yolanda. His big left hand swept down to jerk the fallen man along the floor, to get him out of the way of the door.

Slack Clampitt moaned, "Who was it? Who hit me?"

The footsteps overhead were pounding toward the rear rooms now. Yolanda's heart sank. To make a break for freedom was out of the question.

As she stood there paralyzed, the dying man on the floor choked out some words meant for her—the first and last words he ever spoke to her, and she knew she would always remember them.

"This damned tightwad'll save you from hangin' . . . if you'll spill the treasure secret. . . . Me—I'll be more liberal . . . I'll give you back your gal friend. . . . Couldn't kill that Jane. . . . Had a soft spot for her . . . in my heart."

Yolanda was sure that Slack Clampitt died just outside the heavy wooden door only a few moments after she'd been locked inside the pitch-black inner room.

She was sure, because she could hear Tolozell rummaging through the luckless fellow's clothing for the map as soon as the agonized, half-mocking throat sounds had stopped.

"What—you'll—pay—for a—fool—map!"

That was the end.

Soon Yolanda could hear the bluster of the native police, and Tolozell's stout boasting that they had come just too late to help him catch a dangerous criminal, undoubtedly the ringleader of all this hotel's trouble.

There were the labored steps of men bearing the body up to the next level. Tolozell's voice faded, and at last everything was almost quiet for Yolanda.

But neither the darkness nor the silence were terrifying to her, for by now a voice had spoken softly in her ear.

"We birds of a feather find our way into the same dungeons, don't we? Remember me—Carter O'Connor?"

CHAPTER XXIII

Katherine's Head

"I—I DON'T know how you can be here," Yolanda gasped, "but I'll have to believe it."

"Nice little place," said Carter. "Want to look around?" He turned on a switch and a soft glow emanated from the tattered old red and blue Japanese lantern. "There. Let me look at you, Yolanda. I've been telling myself you couldn't be as beautiful as I imagined. But you are—only more so."

"Carter! What are you doing here? What will happen to us? Do you know anything about Katherine? Have you been in this prison long?"

"Not so fast," Carter laughed. "We're not going anywhere, at least not until we've had a chance to talk. Won't you sit down?"

He suggested that the heap of boxes were excellent chairs, and also serviceable hiding places from which to record the miscellaneous crimes of the Temple underworld.

"The only voice I had trouble catching was that of Jeff Cotton," Carter said. "But fortunately I realized he was ripe for a revolt against his high-powered master. So I bribed him."

"What are you talking about?" Yolanda gasped.

"To begin at the beginning," said Carter, "one of the city officials knew there was an underground passage to this basement. He came with me, we emerged in that corner just beyond where you are sitting, and together we took enough notes to hang Tolozell's whole crew. What's more, I captured Jeff Cotton a few hours ago and held him long enough to get a fuller story. I bribed him to talk by offering him a precious gem. You see, the poor fel-

low was impatient with Tolozell's years of promising a big treasure. To Jeff Cotton one glittering emerald was too tempting to turn down."

Yolanda brought forth a bright green stone. "You mean—*this?*"

"Yes! Where did you get it?"

"On the stairs when I was tumbling down. Jefferson Cotton must have dropped it. But where did you get it?"

"In the strangest place. Out of a water pipe, near the hut of an abandoned farm, out in the region where we're building the highway. I had gone in search of a water supply for our concrete. But a suction pump proved that these pipes had been dry for years."

"I know," said Yolanda. "Mr. Seemo told me about the Chiams' improvements that were never finished. In fact, I wandered past one of the towers."

"A tall structure between the highway and the river?"

"That's it. With a big silvery tank up on top—"

"And thousands of white pigeons flying around the sides."

"White pigeons?" Yolanda echoed. "Yes, I believe there were."

"The peasants feast on those pigeons," said Carter. "But no one tears down their nests, so the tower never runs out of pigeons. It's a shame, though, that they don't go ahead and make use of their water-supply facilities. . . . What are you day-dreaming about, Yolanda?"

SHE came out of her thoughts with a jolt. "I must have put myself under another hypnotic spell. But I was just thinking—I wonder—"

"Yes?"

"Up in the lobby on the floor near my string of paper dolls there's a wand —a metal rod with a silver knob shaped like a little water tower. The white pigeons have all been exploded away by men who can't be trusted. But the knob—well, I've just now figured out that *it might contain a precious stone.*"

"I'll go up and get it for you," said Carter.

"Would you dare?"

"Of course. By this time the officers will have things under control. They're all set to dig to the bottom of these Jap Imperialist connections tonight. They're going to put the squeeze on Tolozell. Mr. Seemo is all set to build a slow fire under him—"

"A fire?"

"Figuratively speaking, of course. With the dope we've gathered on that treacherous old hypnotist they'll burn him to a cinder. Whether they'll imprison him or do something less merciful remains to be seen. At any rate, his power will go up in smoke. I can promise you that."

Yolanda waited, locked in the room, while Carter climbed down through the secret door behind the boxes and hurried on out of hearing.

"A fire under him!" Yolanda murmured. "His power will go up in smoke! But that's what did happen. I was hypnotized, but I remember it perfectly. *The paper doll image of Tolozell went up in smoke!*"

The old superstition was on her, stronger than ever. Her dolls and their human counterparts met with the same fates!

The full flood of superstitions surged back with all their shocking, horrifying implications. Katherine! Katherine!

When Carter came back he found her sobbing bitterly, and she wouldn't be comforted. She had lost interest in the Wand. All she would say was, "Katherine, Katherine! What have I done to you?"

She did not cease her crying until Carter led her out through the long underground passage, supporting her in his strong arms, guiding her hesitant steps.

They came up through another house a quarter of a mile beyond the Temple Hotel, exchanged words with the police officials in charge of the entrance, and emerged into the fresh morning air.

"Did you hear what that official said," Carter asked her gently, "about Tolozell? They're making him answer for everything, even for mutilating one of your paper dolls—and he admitted having done it for some malicious purpose while you were hypnotized."

"He did it?" Yolanda gasped. "Oh—I'm so thankful."

"I don't understand you, Yolanda."

"I knew I didn't feel so toward her. I've searched my heart. There's no hate in it. But still I thought the signs said that I would murder her."

"Who? Katherine?" Carter O'Connor was so amazed at the suggestion that he almost laughed, in spite of the girl's mental tortures over something he didn't understand.

"Katherine's all right," he said. "She had a narrow escape before the police recovered her. But Slack Clampitt didn't harm her. They were right on his trail from the moment the swift kidnapping took place. After they recovered her they spent the rest of the day chasing him into hiding. And that chase ended with the raid on the Temple Hotel—and here we are, safe and sound."

THEY were driving along in O'Connor's roadster now. Yolanda saw nothing of the passing scenery.

"Just where is Katherine?"

"That's what we'll find out here at headquarters. Maybe she'll be there waiting to see you. Who knows?"

Yolanda was weeping softly.

"I'm sorry to be such a baby," she said. "If I told you my fears you'd think them only silly trifles."

"Please tell me."

"Somehow, I just know that Katherine isn't alive. She's been killed—or terribly hurt. I've seen the signs."

"Nonsense. She's—she's too strong, too sure of herself. Besides I'm keeping an eye on her," Carter said proudly. "The worst that could happen to her would be a bawling out from her theater boss. Here, let's go up and find her."

"If I thought she was there," said Yolanda, "I'd come with you. But all I can think of now is the way I last saw her doll—with its head—"

She didn't finish, for Carter O'Connor gave her a careless laugh and an equally careless kiss, and hurried off.

He came back from the city offices carrying a package and two letters, one of which he was reading.

"She left me her forwarding address and all her love," said Carter smiling. "She's gone to Burma. Here's a note for you, too, and a package."

"She's all right?"

"Of course . . . Oh, it says this package for you isn't to be opened until Chiam Day."

Yolanda broke into her note, read it, reread it; she began to laugh. With a third reading she was laughing with a full heart, as unburdened as a song.

"Listen to what she says, Carter: *'My boss tried to fire me because I missed my rehearsals. He supposed it was on account of Tolozell. I tried to explain that I had some apologizing to do to you, Yolie. That made the prune mad. He didn't think it was any excuse. I told him it was the best reason in the world. Then he really got mad and swore at me in Chinese. Then I*

told him off: "You don't need to bite my head off, you old bear," I said. And he came back at me: "You haven't got a head. Tolozell has already chopped it off and tramped on it. And you'll never get it back till you quit giving him the credit for making a dancer out of you. Who put in all those hours of practice," he says. "Tolozell or you? You did, kid. All right, get wise to yourself. It was no more Tolozell than it was magic." Get it, Yolie—magic. I came pretty near telling him that I had a friend who KNEW that magic could do things, but I decided to shut up and win my head back.' . . . Isn't that funny, Carter?"

"She's a swell girl," Carter sighed. "I wonder whom she'll meet in Burma."

CHAPTER XXIV

Chiam Day

IN THE silver knob that adorned what remained of the White Paper Wand they found a tightly packed collection of tiny jewels. And then Yolanda was almost sure.

"Even if I should be wrong," she said, "it would be worth a try."

Carter and Seemo and various representatives of the old Chiam society listened eagerly. They had gathered at the old stone lantern tower for a conference to plan for Chiam Day.

"I have visited the peasants in their homes," said Yolanda. "No finer celebration of the day could be planned than a reopening of the water systems, so these peasants would not have to carry their water from the river. If the water tower can be cleansed of whatever debris it has accumulated, if pumps can be installed to start the water running, this will make a happier Chiam Day than all the speeches we could muster."

"It can be done," said Carter O'Connor, "with my workmen and equipment."

"Then let that be our decision," said Yolanda, "for I believe that is what John How would wish."

At first the officials were not entirely satisfied. They had come expecting this young American girl to tell them precisely where the treasure lay. "No Chiam Day is complete without at least a promise of the treasure," they said.

"But our one promise," said Yolanda, "lies in interpreting John How's symbols correctly. Let me tell you what happened a few days ago when I came back to this stone lantern tower for my hidden suitcase.

"As I lifted the case, I felt that it was magically drawn in a certain direction. You see, it contained the White Paper Wand which John How said would lead me to the treasure.

"When I had cut a paper doll from the Wand's covering on a previous day, it had led me way out here and then had gone swirling away from me in a rivulet.

"Now, as I once more tried to follow a paper doll, it led me toward that old unused water tower. I followed it until one of the white pigeons picked it up in his bill and flew to the point of the tower.

"The white pigeons should have reminded me at once of what John How had told me of the Wand. He compared its white paper covering to the wings of white pigeons who knew their way. Therefore, the Wand itself was symbolical of the water tower, surrounded by the white birds.

"And finally, as you have seen, the shiny dome of the Wand contained jewels. The metal tank, then, at the top of the shaft, must contain the treasure."

"Bravo," said Carter O'Connor,

smiling. "And if you need further evidence that Miss Lavelle is on the right track, one gem from the Chiam treasure was drawn out, along with the settlings of the dry pipe, when I applied a suction pump to the hydrant."

"Let us go to the tower at once," said Seemo. "This Chiam Day will be the one we have awaited for many years."

The day was all that the people of that country could hope for, and more. The wealth that represented their own past earnings and savings flowed back into their hands. And into newer and brighter promises of better homes and a happier land.

THE day was a happy one for Yolanda. She could sing the praises of John How as heartily as anyone. But when the questions arose concerning the secrets of Chiam science and magic, she could only share their curiosity over the unanswered mysteries.

The package left by Katherine had not been opened.

That night when Yolanda and Carter O'Connor retreated from the din of celebration in Bangkok's streets to the quiet of her hotel suite, she clipped the strings, and lifted the lid of the wide flat cardboard box.

There was no note. Only the paper doll. It lay smiling up at her as it had smiled eleven years before. It was a crude and comical work of art, a seven-year-old girl's impression of a thirteen-year-old boy hero.

Yolanda smiled in her heart. She glanced over her shoulder.

Carter hadn't seen. He was gazing out the window.

"We're finishing our road job next week," he mentioned casually. "I'll have a couple weeks off then."

"Planning something?" Yolanda asked.

"Thinking a little of flying over to Burma. Sorta like to see Katherine again before she gets too far away."

"You think a lot of Katherine, don't you?"

"Darned swell girl," said Carter. "How about it. Would you like to go with me, Yolanda?"

"Thanks so much, but I'll be on my way back to America."

"That's tough," Carter said awkwardly. "I hoped you'd be around awhile, so I could have someone to pal around with. Nice American women don't grow on trees when you're out on a road job in these foreign lands. I've been thinking—if I'd had a chance to get to know you, like—well, like I know Katherine—well, who knows—"

Yolanda, re-wrapping the package, pretended she wasn't listening.

"Oh, by the way, Carter. When you see Katherine, will you take this package back to her? She made a mistake. It's hers, not mine."

But even as he took the package—his hands lingering upon hers, his eyes searching her face for a fuller understanding—she wondered. In spite of herself something was happening that no will to sacrifice could prevent. Somewhere in the back of her mind she was already starting to fashion a new paper doll. It was Carter O'Connor, *the man*. She was giving away only the boy.

THE END

BUY WAR BONDS

Don't let the cost of this war pile up a huge mountain of debt that will rob your children of a chance to be happy and to live the life that is rightfully theirs!

PAY YOUR OWN WAY TO VICTORY AND PEACE!

NO LONGER "THE FORGOTTEN METAL"

MAGNESIUM, frequently called "the forgotten metal," seems to be coming into its own at last. The war, with industry's insistent demand for metals, has given it new popularity.

Magnesium was discovered hy Sir Humphrey Davy in 1808. Since then, it has been known for its medicinal qualities and for its use in photographer's flashhulhs, but, as a light and sturdy alloy metal, it has been ignored hy manufacturers for many years.

Today, magnesium is being used in the production of incendiary bombs and scores of airplane parts. It is being produced in huge quantities as it takes over more jobs of heavier ferrous and nonferrous metals. Producers today can hardly believe that, as recently as 1938, only 2,000 tons of magnesium were produced in the United States.

Magnesium can be obtained in limitless quantities from many sources. Most salts contain magnesium; the ocean's brine is heavily charged with it; the silicates in a tree's leaves contain magnesium. Magnesium constitutes two per cent of the earth's crust. Much of the present tonnage comes from the ocean, hut the dolomite and magnesite rocks in the Western United States are buge magnesium potentials, too. In addition to tbese sources, new processes for extraction have been developed by government engineers. Thus, tbe supply is inexhaustible.

The outstanding characteristics of magnesium are its relative lightness and strength. It weighs one-third less than aluminum, and weight-for-weight, its castings have a normal tensile strength greater than any metal.

With such useful characteristics, it is not surprising that magnesium is considered ideal for airplane construction. It is being used in various fittings for all types of pursuit, fighter, and homber planes, and is also being used for making parts of the motor, wheels, propellers, and in the fuselage and wings. Engineers designing airplanes have pointed out that hy substituting magnesium for aluminum in supercharger housings, nose covers, and a few of the fittings, a saving of over 90 pounds per ship can he effected.

The city of Chicago has been chosen as the center of American magnesium use. The world's largest magnesium foundry is nearing completion there—a part of the Howard Foundry Company. The plant will have a monthly output of more than 500,000 pounds of castings.

Frank C. Howard, president of the company, has announced that the new foundry has developed processes for making magnesium castings of a much larger size than has ever been commercially practical hefore. Single castings up to seven and eight feet in diameter will be included as part of the daily output. This and the other brancbes of the company are engaged on war orders 100 per cent.

The pace-setters of the magnesium industry prohably sit back and sigh every so often. "Just think," they must say, "the chemistry hooks of twenty years ago declared that magnesium 'bas little or no commercial value.'"

ANOTHER WAR SHORTAGE

TO THE growing list of shortages—rubber, scrap, skilled lahor, you can add the shortage of laboratory animals for according to United States Surgeon General Thomas C. Parran the guinea pig, rabbit, and white mouse are really getting scarce.

This shortage is not to be passed over lightly for lahoratory animals are a vital necessity. Each of them reacts in certain ways to various diseases and experimental and accepted cures; furtber research regarding these cures cannot continue without these animals. For example, by using guinea pigs we can determine the potency of diphtheria toxin and antitoxin while their blood is used in the Wassermann tests for syphilis.

White mice are used to develop rahies' virus while rabbits are useful in tests for scarlet fever respiratory diseases and many other human ailments.

The present shortage can be blamed on the fact that wartime research needs have tripled the demand for the laboratory animals. The number of men given the Wassermann test in their Army induction examinations has caused a shortage in the supply of guinea pig blood.

The sad part about the situation is that the supply cannot catch up with the demand for some time.

Although most of us think of guinea pigs, rabbits, and white mice as being continual hreeders of large families, the facts do not show this to be true. Guinea pigs only have four litters a year consisting of ahout four offspring in each. Although rabbits and mice have as many as six in their litters, they only produce two or three litters a year.

Moreover, breeding these animals has its share of headaches for they are susceptible to various diseases and ailments and only perfect specimens can be used in research work.

To combat the shortage, the laboratories are seeking out new animals that can he used in their experiments while the American Rahbit and Cavy Breeders Association is trying to encourage amateurs to start home hreeding.

—CARTER T. WAINWRIGHT.



A HORSE ON LEFTY FEEP

By ROBERT BLOCH

WHEN I sat down in Jack's Shack the restaurant was almost empty. The breakfast crowd was gone and the luncheon crowd hadn't arrived. Jack took my order and I sat back to wait.

Over in one corner a waiter sat at a bare table with a child, evidently his small son. He was apparently doing his best to teach the boy a few professional secrets. At any rate, Jack's waiter was reciting the alphabet to him. I listened.

"A is Appetite, you come here to feed it;

"B's for Bicarbonate—when you eat here you need it;

"C's for Convulsions—"

I stopped listening and whirled around. Somebody had tapped me on the shoulder.

I blinked, shuddered.

"Lefty Feep!" I gasped.

Lefty Feep was something to shudder at, particularly in the morning. His face was as pale and weak as a cup of Jack's coffee. The circles under his eyes resembled doughnuts.

To make it worse, Feep's suit was ripped to shreds. It had once been very

When the hour for unmasking came, a ghastly thing happened — for none could say which was the mask and which the real thing



In an instant havoc reigned in the bar—havoc wrought by beings neither human nor animal

loud, but in its present state it was only a whisper.

Feep stumbled into a chair and slumped across the table.

I struggled to conceal my surprise.

"Good morning," I said.

Feep's eyes popped.

"That's what it is!" he muttered. "I suspect it all along. No wonder everything is so faint and quaint. It's *morning!*"

"Of course it's morning," I told him. "That big yellow thing you see up in the sky is called the sun. And those people running around on the street are going to work."

"Sky!" groaned Feep. "Work!"

"Cheer up, Lefty," I said. "You're old enough to know about such things, I think."

He moaned his order to the waiter and sat back. From time to time he examined his tattered clothing and shook his head.

"What happened to you?" I inquired. "You look as though you've been kicked in the face by a horse."

"Horse?" screamed Lefty Feep. "Who tells you about a horse?"

"Nobody," I answered. "Just a figure of speech, that's all." I forced a chuckle. "As a matter of fact, I'd merely imagine you were returning home from an all-night party."

"Party?" Again Feep shrieked. "Who is the smarty who spills about this party?"

"I'm only guessing."

"Your guessing is most distressing," sighed Lefty Feep. "As a matter of fact, I am very coarse with a horse recently, and that is responsible for my present fickle, ickle fate."

His eyes began to light up. I knew the sign, so I began to get up.

"Let me spill you a few beans about this recent and indecent affair," he urged.

"Sorry, Lefty—I've got a quick date down the street."

"Never mind about your hasty girl friends," grunted Lefty Feep, hauling me back into my chair. "Last night I experience the strangest thing that ever happens to me."

"What did you do—start telling the truth?" I muttered. But he didn't hear me.

"Yes," said Feep, grabbing me firmly by the shoulders, "what happens to me is so unusual that the queerness of it makes it positively extraordinary, to say nothing of being remarkably different."

"Something screwy?"

"The very word!" snapped Feep. "I wish I have your education so I can express myself."

"I would like to express you—to Alaska," I whispered. Once again Feep didn't hear me. He was coiling and uncoiling his tongue.

"Listen to this and see how it strikes you," he said.

I listened. He struck me right between the eyes with a verbal barrage.

* * *

YESTERDAY afternoon I am marching my arches down the drag getting ready to run into a tavern. Instead I run into Dime-Mouth McCarthy.

I think I mention this personality to you before. Dime-Mouth McCarthy is a very scholarly type of jerk, and a great reader. In fact he once reads meters for the gas company.

"Greetings!" I remark.

"Well, if it ain't my old pal Lefty Feep! How are youse?" asks my scholarly friend. "Youse coitenly look in the pink."

"You are mistaken," I tell him. "There is nothing in the pink about me except my tooth-brush. I personally am in the red."

"I am extremely murderfied to hear

this," says Dime-Mouth. "Because I figure I can perhaps negoat-she-ate a modest loan from youse. Let us say ten dollars."

"Let us say nuts to that idea," I suggest. "But just for the sake of argument, why do you need ten dollars? I figure canned heat only costs you a quarter."

Dime-Mouth McCarthy gives me the old wink and blink and waves his mittens in the ozone.

"What is the matter with youse?" he inquires. "Don't youse remember that tonight is the night for the big fancy dress ball?"

"Fancy dress ball?"

"Coitenly. The big masquerade b r a w l for the Anti-Amusement League."

All at once I do recall. Tonight is the big evening. Once a year everybody puts on a costume and heads for the headquarters of the Anti-Amusement League.

The Anti-Amusement League is a sort of club we have in the neighborhood. It gets its name from the fact that all the members are pledged not to indulge in any amusements—such as opium smuggling, counterfeiting, bank-robbing, or plain and fancy homicide.

Of course there is no harm in such business operations as gambling or drinking, so the members have a pretty good time after all. Everybody belongs—Gorilla Gabface, down at the pool hall, and Subconscious Sigmund the psychiatrist, and all the rest of the gang.

As a matter of fact, I am anxious to go to this massacre myself, and make a date with a ginch for that purpose, only it slips my mind.

So I am very rejoiceful when Dime-Mouth McCarthy mentions this item.

"But why do you need ten guilders?" I ask him.

"To rent a costume. Everybody must come there in a disguise, see?"

"And just where do you figure on renting a costume?"

"Why, at Out-Of-Business Oscar's," he tells me. "Out-Of-Business Oscar is the only fink in the neighborhood with costumes to rent. I am on my merry way down to his hockshop now, only I do not have any laughing lettuce with which to pay for no outfit, understand?"

"Well, maybe I can help you out," I decide. "Only not ten guilders worth, I'm afraid. Now that I come to think of it, I need a costume for tonight myself."

"It's getting late," says Dime-Mouth McCarthy. "*Tempus phooey,* as the old saying goes. We better hurry if we want to drape our shapes. Youse can come along with me right now."

SO WE scramble and amble down the pavement until we come to Out-Of-Business Oscar's pawn shop, which he recently redecorates very fancy and now runs under a classy reading:

YE OLDE HOCK SHOPPE

We march in and Out-Of-Business Oscar extends his chin in a grin.

"Well, if it isn't Lefty Feep!" he yaps. "And that notorious bum and moocher, Dime-Mouth McCarthy."

Dime-Mouth gives him a dirty look. "Kindly do not refer to me as notorious," he says. "That is an insult."

"My apologies," says Oscar. "And what can I do for you?"

"Drop dead," says Dime-Mouth.

But I ignore this tiny talk and proceed to go stepping up to the counter.

"I am going to a masquerade party tonight," I tell him. "I don't want anybody to recognize me."

"Why don't you go disguised as a gentleman?" Oscar cracks.

"Never mind the sour-chasm," yells Dime-Mouth. "Me and my friend

Lefty want a couple of those old Spanish costumes youse hand out."

"I would like to rent you a costume," says Oscar, "but they are just about all gone. Nearly everybody in the neighborhood is going to the Anti-Amusement League masquerade tonight, and they all come in and pick out costumes already. I do not think I have anything left over for you."

"But we can't go without a costume," wails Dime-Mouth, getting very excited in his scholarly fashion. "That would be a discrepancy."

"Well, look over discrepancy if there's anything you want," says Oscar, pointing to a pile of dirty costumes on a table.

We paw around for a while. Dime-Mouth holds up some rags.

"Would youse like to go as Little Bo Peep?" he asks me.

I shake my head and my fist.

"How about a nice suit of armour?"

"Can't wear it," Oscar interrupts. "Priorities."

"Well what do we do?" I inquire. "We both need costumes. And I can only lay out about $3.75 for them."

Oscar shrugs. Then he stares at us. "You both need costumes. And all you have is $3.75. Well—I might give *one* costume for the two of you."

"One costume for two of us? How will that work out?"

"Wait and see!"

Oscar dives into the back room. He begins to bang around in there. After a while he comes out, dragging something after him.

"My Gawd, a horse!" yells Dime-Mouth McCarthy.

"A horse costume," Oscar corrects him. "Yes, gentlemen, I have here a really unusual masquerade disguise. This fine trick horse costume. It comes in two sections, as you see—the front legs and head, and the hind legs and . . . associated regions. One of you wears the front half, the other wears the back half. Put them both together and you have a really lovely horse."

"A Charley horse from stooping over in the thing!" I yell. "No, Oscar, that won't do! I don't want to be a horse."

"But you have no choice," Oscar reminds me. "If you want to go to this masquerade ball you'll have to be a horse and like it."

"I may be a horse but I won't like it," I insist.

"Maybe we better take it, Lefty," says Dime-Mouth. "Why you'll look swell in that horse," Oscar flatters us. "You'll be the sensation of the ball. Probably win a prize."

"What kind of a prize, a bag of oats?"

"Maybe. Because something tell me this horse was made for you. You'll look natural in it, really you will."

WELL, I am a sucker for flattery. Or maybe I am just a sucker. But anyhow, I put down the money and we walk out of there with the horse costume in two parts.

"Getting late," I mention to Dime-Mouth. "Let's go up to my place and put on the costume. I've got to call for my ginch."

So we go up to my dump and haul out the costume.

"Wait a minute, now," says Dime-Mouth. "We have a problem to decide."

"What problem?"

"Well, who is going to be what in this horse?"

I never think of this before, but it is a delicate problem at that.

We stare at the two ends of the horse costume.

"I pay for it," I remind Dime-Mouth.

"That does not matter," he tells me. "It is the principle of the thing."

"There is more air for the guy in back," I coax. He can stick his head out of the hole in the middle."

"Well, then youse are the fresh air fiend, so youse be the back end," Dime-Mouth suggests.

"But I am healthier than you," I tell him. "You need the air. So I will make a sacrifice and you can be the back end."

"I will not permit youse to be so generous," Dime-Mouth assures me. "Youse may be the back end. It is an honor, but youse really deserves it."

"To hell with that," I mutter. "We will toss a coin. Or rather, I will."

"Heads or tails?"

"That's right. Heads or tails."

So I pull out a penny and throw it up. It comes down like a dive bomber and lands on the carpet. We look at it with much interest.

"Tails," whispers Dime-Mouth. "Youse get tails."

"Yes," I groan. "I get tails. It's a horse on me."

"Well, let us put on our costume," grins Dime-Mouth. "It is getting late."

So we put on the two ends of the horse. Dime-Mouth has the head over his head, the shoulders over his chest, and the front legs down over his legs. Just like a complete suit. And a piece of the horse's body sticks out in back, to be joined with my end.

I have the hind legs over my legs, and the tail hanging down my back. My head and arms are inside the body of the horse. But when I want to stand up straight my head and arms stick out of it—so that I am like a horse from the waist down and a man from the waist up.

"Stick your head back in," Dime-Mouth tells me. "Then we can join together at the middle."

So we join together. Dime-Mouth looks out of the eye-holes in the horse-head and sees us in the mirror.

"Very nice," he says. "Very nice. And youse look so very natural, Lefty."

This burns me up, since I am entirely concealed in my end of the horse.

"Now we must practice walking together," says Dime-Mouth.

I HAVE eye-holes in the horse's stomach, but it is awful to walk all bent over, holding on to Dime-Mouth so the horse stays together. The idea of doing this all evening does not appeal to me. And it will not appeal to my date, either. She will feel a little cut off from me.

To make it worse, walking is very difficult. I find it hard to keep in step with Dime-Mouth. We prance around the room, and Dime-Mouth lets out a couple of neighs just to make it look good.

"Phooey!" I mutter. "I can't do this all night. It's hot inside here. Besides, I detect that you eat garlic for dinner today."

"We can break up at the ball," Dime-Mouth tells me. "Though I know I am going to feel lost without youse."

"All right," I grumble. "Come on. I am going to call for my ginch."

"The ginch, by all means!" agrees Dime-Mouth.

We trot down the stairs and up the street, carrying the costume under our arms—but trotting just for practice. Finally we arrive at the home of this ginch of mine. She is a little item by the name of Josephine, but I call her Ration because she is my sugar.

We arrive at her door-step and I get ready to ring the bell. Then Dime-Mouth taps me on the shoulder.

"Wait a minute," he whispers. "Why don't we surprise this tomato of yours? Let us slip into our Hi-Ho Silver outfit and make like a horse. She will be very much amused and confused."

"Why not?" I shrug. "She will have to get used to it anyway, I suppose."

So we put on our horse, stand together, and then Dime-Mouth rings the door-bell with his hoof.

Josephine comes to the door and opens it. She stands there blinking at us.

"Why if it isn't Lefty Feep," she says.

This burns me up, considering the fact that I am wearing this particular disguise. I do not know how she recognizes me and I do not wish to guess.

"Say, this is splendid," she giggles. "You couldn't choose a cuter costume."

That makes me feel better, because I worry that Josephine will not approve of it. But she seems to be crazy about the idea.

"Just the thing," she murmurs. "A horse! Because I am coming as Annie Oakley the Queen of the Western Plains—and you can ride me over on your back!"

Sure enough, when she steps out I see she is dressed like a cow-girl. Being bowlegged, she looks quite becoming in the outfit. But when I think of having to carry her around on our backs, it is not so good.

But she insists and we bend down. She climbs on. "Giddyap!" she yells. Also "Whoopee!" And digs her spurs into my ears. We are off.

It is quite a ride. I am very glad the streets are pretty deserted. And I am gladder still when we pull up at the hall where the Anti-Amusement League is holding this masquerade. Because Josephine is quite a load to carry, bouncing around the way she does.

"You boys will win all the prizes," she tells us, as we go in.

Dime-Mouth and I prance into the ball room and look around.

THE brawl is already under way, and there is a terrific crowd. Dime-Mouth and I separate and stand up to take a look around, each of us wearing our half of the costume.

I spot a number of familiar personalities. For example, there is Gorilla Gabface. He comes over when he sees me and flashes a big smile. "How do you like it?" he asks.

He is wearing a gorilla costume, and a very realistic one.

"Very nice," I sneer at him. "But why don't you wear a costume of some kind?"

"But I am—oh, I get it!" he snarls. "You think you are sharp, Lefty. You should talk, in that outfit of yours. You look like a fugitive from a brewery wagon!"

"Hello, Lefty, you're looking great!" It is Out-of-Business Oscar who interrupts us. He is wearing a long white nightgown and a gold crown. Under his arm he carries a sort of combination seashell and old fashioned victrola horn.

"Who are you and what is that?" I inquire.

"I am King Croesus," he tells me. "And just to symbolize the fact that I am rich, I carry this Corncupia. The Horn of Plenty."

He reaches down into it and pulls out a handful of fake money which he scatters on the floor.

This amuses me, because the only way to get Oscar to let go of a dollar is to cut off his hands. The Corncupia looks plenty corny to me.

All at once I spot Subconscious Sigmund. He waves at me and comes over.

"What in the world are you supposed to be?" I gasp.

The psychologist smiles. "I am not anything in the world," he says. "I am something in my own mind. I represent the Infantile Stage of the Ego. The childish emotional level of the intelligence."

"You can say that again," I remark.

Because Subconscious S i g m u n d i s dressed like a baby, in a long bib and a bonnet. He still smokes a cigar, though, and I detect a flask bulging under his diapers.

"By the way," says Sigmund, "I have a guest with me. A visitor. Gentlemen, meet my distinguished European friend, exiled from Germany—Herr Tonic."

Herr Tonic comes up and bows. He is a tall, bald-headed baby wearing a big purple robe all embroidered with stars and crescents. In one hand he carries a funny-looking cane, or stick.

"What kind of an outfit is this?" I ask.

"This is a magician's robe," he tells me. "And this, of course, is my magic wand."

"That is cute," pipes up Josephine. "Coming disguised as a magician."

Herr Tonic gives her a scowl and shrugs. But before he can say anything, Gorilla Gabface lurches over.

"Let's throw our toes," he suggests. "The band is getting out of hand."

So Josephine and Gabface dance away.

Subconscious Sigmund pulls me into a corner with this Herr Tonic. Dime-Mouth McCarthy follows.

"Let us have a drink," says Sigmund, waving his flask.

DIME-MOUTH nods politely and then wrenches the flask out of Sigmund's hand.

We spin the bottle.

"Isn't this jolly?" says Herr Tonic, looking around with a smile on his grim puss. "I am pleased to see peoples enjoying themselves, *ja?* And such a pretty costumes!"

Dime-Mouth nods. "Ain't it the truth?" he says. "I always like fun because it is so amusing, particularly if you want to enjoy entertainment."

Herr Tonic looks at Dime-Mouth and I can see he is impressed by his intelligence.

Dime-Mouth is encouraged to start blabbing.

"Youse want to know something?" he says. "When I come in here tonight to this fancy-dress ball, I say to myself, I say, 'Dime-Mouth, doesn't this remind youse of the story of Cinderella?' And it soitenly does."

"Cinderella?" I ask. "What's that?"

He turns to me. "Do youse mean to say youse never heard the story of Cinderella?"

"I don't go to stag parties."

"But this is a fairy story for the brats. It is very famous. Don't youse ever hear it at your mother's knee?"

"When I am on my mother's knee years ago," I inform him, "I am always facing downwards and I cannot hear anything but the sound of a paddle."

So Dime-Mouth McCarthy, being educated, tells me the story of Cinderella. He uses a lot of ten-cent words, but translated into English, it runs like this.

Once upon a time there is a little frail by the name of Cinderella who lives all alone in the woods with nobody for company except a step-mother, two step-sisters, and a step-ladder. The other ginches are called step-sisters because they are always out stepping, but Cinderella has to stay home and rattle the Venetian blinds while her old lady and the other tomatoes hit the high spots. One day they get a fancy bid to a brawl at the king's castle. And off they go, leaving Cinderella parked in the kitchen to manicure potatoes.

She is sitting there crying the mascara out of her eyes because she doesn't promote an invite to this shindig, when all at once an old bimbo appears and asks why she is making shed with the tears.

Cinderella hands her this hard-luck

story and the old wrinkle smiles. She waves her hand and turns into a beautiful chorus girl with wings.

"I am your fairy godmother, Cinderella," she pipes.

"Don't hand me that stuff," says Cinderella, who is no rummy.

"But look at my magic wand," says the beautiful fairy. "I am going to send you to the party in style. I will wave this wand and you'll see."

So she waves the wand, and Cinderella find her slacks are now a lovely evening gown. Another wave of the wand and she has a permanent. A couple of waves fixes her up with a chauffeur and a new car. The fairy almost breaks the wand trying, but finally manages to even produce tires for the car.

Cinderella is off to the brawl.

"Whatever you do, get back here by midnight," says the fairy. "And take good care of your shoes."

Because along with the dress, Cinderella is wearing a pair of fancy glass slippers, like goldfish bowls.

Cinderella promises to get back and the fairy disappears. Well, the party is a great success. Cinderella meets up with Prince Charming, the king's son, and gives him the old come-on. Pretty soon they are dancing around, and the step-sisters are left out in the cold—because once Cinderella gets her hooks into a guy, he is sunk.

But she hoists a couple too many and at midnight she is still shagging around the dance-floor. She hears the clock strike and remembers. She runs like hell, and loses a slipper on the way out, but by the time she hits the air and sobers up, her fancy clothes are gone and she is back in slacks.

Meanwhile Prince Charming finds the glass slipper and figuring out that anybody who can afford glass slippers must have a lot of mazuma, he says he will marry the girl—if he can find her. So all the local ginches try on the slipper because if it fits, it proves who the girl at the brawl was. Only it doesn't fit. Finally the Prince's stooges come to Cinderella's dump with the brogan. They blow a shoe-horn and announce the royal proclamation. So Cinderella's step-mother and step-sisters try the slipper on, and it's no go. Then Cinderella tries it. It fits perfectly, of course.

So the Prince marries Cinderella. And the moral of the whole story seems to be that you'll get your man if you have size 16 feet.

I THINK it is a pretty foolish story, and tell Dime-Mouth just that.

"But it is only a fairy story tale," says Dime-Mouth. "It does not happen, remember. Just a fragment of the imagination, see?"

He takes another drink. So does Sigmund and Herr Tonic—who is lucky he isn't a lobster, because he is pretty boiled.

"Youse don't catch the insignificance of the story, Lefty," Dime-Mouth complains. "It is just a legend, see? And this masquerade reminds me of it. But don't get the idea I fall for such stuff and nonsense."

"Nonsense, you call it?"

It is Herr Tonic who speaks.

We stare at him.

"You dare to call it nonsense? Why I have such a magic wand as you describe right here."

He taps the long cane he is carrying. I smile.

"I know, but you're just wearing a disguise," I tell him.

"What gives you that idea? Sigmund invites me here as his guest. I am not in any costume. This is what I wear when I arrive here from the old country. I am a magician."

"Youse cannot hand us that," says Dime-Mouth. "Youse are not one of these fairy godmothers."

Herr Tonic, what with the liquor he drinks and the rage he is in, now looks as red as a sloe gin fizz, and twice as deadly.

For the first time I realize how tall he is, and how black his eyes are, set in that bald forehead of his. He stands there in his long robe, waving his arms so the embroidered stars and moons glitter like his eyes do.

"So," he mutters. "I am not a fairy godmother, *hein? Aber nicht* a magician? I, the greatest evocator and necromancer of all the covens of the Hartz Mountains?"

Subconscious Sigmund looks worried and grabs Herr Tonic by the sleeve.

"Take it easy," he mumbles. "Please —don't do anything rash."

But Herr Tonic shakes himself loose. He holds up his long cane or stick. For a minute I get a close gander at it and realize it is covered all over with carvings—dragons and skulls and other pleasant things.

"And this is not a magic wand, *ja?*" yells Herr Tonic. "Well, I shall give you a demonstration."

"No—stop!" yells Sigmund.

But it is too late. Herr Tonic backs away and brings his wand up. "Anything can be transformed," he growls. "I can take any one of you and change you. But somehow, I think you are all better just the way you are. If you are *really* that way."

I cannot understand what he means.

Then he waves his wand, and I understand only too well.

Herr Tonic w a v e s h i s wand, all around the ballroom. All around. And he whispers some words under his gin-soaked breath.

Then there is a scream, rising higher than the clarinet in the band.

Because people change.

Or, rather, they do not change.

They stay just as they are—only *real!*

Gorilla Gabface is the first to notice it. He is dancing with my ginch Josephine just as Herr Tonic waves his wand. All at once he lets go of Josephine and also lets go with a roar.

"Oooooorph!" yells Gorilla Gabface. "Aaaaargh! Gurrrrrr!"

And he begins to tear at his gorilla costume. Only it does not come off. And Gorilla Gabface finds it hard to tear at anything because his arms are now long enough to touch the floor with his elbows.

"Gosh!" squeals my ginch Josephine. "Gorilla Gabface is *really* a gorilla!"

Then I understand, like I say. Herr Tonic has a magic wand, and he merely waves it and turns everybody at the ball into just what their costumes represent.

I LOOK around. Dime-Mouth McCarthy is standing there in the front half of the horse. Only now he is actually that—the front half of a horse. The head is real. He looks like a horse's neck to me.

When I see him he starts to neigh and whinny and one of his two hoofs comes up and points at Subconscious Sigmund. I stare at Sigmund.

At first I cannot see him. Then I look close to the ground. Subconscious Sigmund is down there, on his hands and knees. He is crawling around in his baby costume, looking plenty confused.

He stares up at me and waves his cigar.

"Da da!" he lisps. "Lefty Fweep! You muft do somefing! Stwop Herr Twonic from getting away—make him change uf bwack into pweople agwain! Oh, this is tewible!"

It is indeed terrible. All around me people are yelling and pointing at each other. The fake clowns are real clowns now. The disguised pirates actually are running around with cutlasses. The women who come as senoritas are gabbling in Spanish. It is a mess.

I observe all this from behind a curtain at the side of the hall, just sticking my head out.

Josephine comes running up to me, with her spurs jingling.

"Oh, Lefty—what's the matter?" she cries.

"Plenty," I mutter.

"Everybody's changed!

"You're telling me?"

"What are you doing hiding behind that curtain, Lefty?"

"Nothing. I like it here."

"But we must do something. This is no time for horseplay."

"Don't say such things!" I snarl.

"But Lefty—everybody's changed!"

"I know it," I shriek. "And what do you suppose happens to me?"

I come out from the curtains and let her look. She almost faints.

"You're—you're *half horse!*" she gasps.

It is true. I stare down at myself again. A minute ago I am standing up with my head and arms and shoulders sticking out of the rear end of the horse costume that covers my legs and hips.

Now I am still standing up. My head and arms and shoulders are still sticking out.

But from the waist down I am a horse!

I have two hoofs and a long, silky tail.

That is what happens to me when Herr Tonic waves his wand.

From the waist up I am human. Otherwise I am like one of these centaurs in the legends, but with one set of horse legs instead of two.

"We must do something," Josephine whispers. "People are starting to go crazy out there."

"They are not the only ones," I tell her. "What about me? How can I live this way? Why my trousers won't even fit any more. And I will probably have to get myself a jockey and a stable boy."

Subconscious Sigmund crawls up to me, followed by Dime-Mouth and Gorilla Gabface.

"Gurrrrrulgh!" moans Gabface.

"Nyaaaaaaa!" neighs Dime-Mouth.

"I wanno change bwack!" lisps Subconscious Sigmund.

"Where's that Herr Tonic?" I yell. Looking around all of a sudden, I do not see him in all this confusion.

"He disappweared!" Sigmund chokes out. "He wan away!"

"We must catch him and make him change us back!" Josephine says, excited.

"But what about all these people here?"

"We must keep them here in the ballroom until Herr Tonic returns to change them to normal bodies again."

"How do we do that?" I ask.

Then I see the answer.

OUT-OF-BUSINESS Oscar lurches by. He is still wearing his King Croesus crown, and a very sick look. The sick look is easy to explain. Because he carries this big Horn of Plenty under his arm. And now he is dipping into it and tossing out money.

"I can't stop—I can't help myself!" he groans. "I must give away money."

"Good," I tell him. "You stand right here at the door and keep it up. Give away dough. People will scramble for it. That's the only way to hold them here until we find this magician and make him change us back."

"I must keep giving away money?"

"You can't stop anyway. And if you ever want to stop in the future, we better find Herr Tonic," Josephine tells him.

So he shakes his head and begins to scatter coins and bills.

Meanwhile the rest of us head for the door.

"He can't go far," I mutter. "He's a stranger in town, isn't he, Sigmund?"

"Yef. And he is so drunk he pwobabwy just wants a dwink down the stweet."

"Come on, then—we'll comb every bar in the neighborhood until we locate that human dandruff."

Out we go. Dime-Mouth prances on ahead. Josephine clanks her spurs behind him. Gorilla Gabface hulks along, making ape noises, but he carries little Subconscious Sigmund under his arm. I bring up the rear—and I do mean rear, with my particular costume now a regular part of me.

We hit the street, and feel lucky that it is empty. The sight of a cowgirl leading the front half of a horse, followed by a gorilla carrying a baby, and a human centaur—well, it might attract a little comment. To say nothing of hysterics.

"There's a bar!" I yell, spotting a gin-mill across the street. "Maybe he's wandering with his wand in there."

"We can't go in this way," Josephine objects. "They have some awful funny customers in there, but we are more awful than funny."

"You go in alone," I tell her. "We'll wait outside."

So in she goes. We stand there.

Pretty soon everybody gets impatient. Dime-Mouth is neighing and pawing the ground with his hoofs. Gorilla Gabface looks unhappy because his knuckles scrape the sidewalk. Subconscious Sigmund, baby or no baby, is still a little tipsey and very weepy.

"Baw!" he whimpers. "I wanna dwink!"

And so do I. I cannot help glancing behind me and whenever I do, I get a shock. I must quiet my nerves.

"All right," I decide. "We'll go in. But we must behave, see? Dime-Mouth, you wait here, and Gabface stays with you. Come to think of it, Subconscious Sigmund wouldn't look so good in a tavern either. I will go in alone."

But this idea does not seem to go over.

"You chiseler!" mutters Sigmund in his weak baby voice. "We all gwo in or nobwody doef!"

I shrug and flip my tail. "O.K. But remember—we must pretend we are still masquerades, see? With very realistic costumes on. That goes for you, Dime-Mouth, and you too, Gabface. And Sigmund is supposed to be a real baby. Understand?"

They all nod and we walk into the tavern.

THERE is quite a loud crowd in there, and it takes a minute to spot Josephine standing at the bar. It takes a minute for the crowd to spot us, and by that that time we are way down on the end of the bar where it is dark.

"Do you see this Herr Tonic?" I whisper to Josephine.

"No. He is in here about ten minutes ago, the bartender tells me, but now he is gone. Let's get out of here—you look awful."

"Get in the booth," I whisper to Dime-Mouth and Gabface. "I'll pass drinks in to you. Josephine, hold Sigmund and remember he's your baby. I'll stand at the bar with you. From the waist up I look all right, and the bartender can't see over the bar."

That is the way we work it. The bartender comes up.

"What'll it be, folks?" he asks.

"A Tom Collins," says Josephine.

"Make mine whiskey," I tell him. "Three whiskeys."

"Three?"

"Of course. One to drink, one for a chaser, and one to take the taste of the chaser out of my mouth."

He shrugs and pours. I pass two whiskeys into the booth for Dime-Mouth and Gabface when he isn't looking. Then I drink the third.

"My, you certainly can put them away!" comments the bartender, looking around at my empty glasses.

"Don't fogwet baby!" lips Sigmund, from Josephine's arms.

"Why of course," says Josephine, smiling. "Baby wants his bottle, doesn't he?"

"We have no milk, lady," says the bartender.

"Milk, hell!" bawls little Sigmund. "Give me a bwottle of gin!"

The bartender's eyes pop. Sigmund ignores him and pulls out his old cigar, which he lights up and puffs.

"What kind of a baby is that, lady?" he asks.

"A bottle baby," I explain.

"Are you its father?"

"Of course."

"But he doesn't look like you."

"I should hope not," giggles Josephine.

The bartender is too curious. He leans over the bar to stare at me and gets an eyeful of my hoofs and tail.

"Jumping Ike!" he yells.

And just at that moment a couple happens to blunder into the booth where Gorilla Gabface and Dime-Mouth McCarthy are hiding.

"There's an ape in my booth!" yells the girl.

"Never mind about your boy-friend," I come back, but too late. Her escort now notices Dime-Mouth.

"There's a horse drinking in my seat!" he shouts.

Between the two of them and the bartender, everybody is staring at us.

Dime-Mouth and Gorilla Gabface join us at the bar. I prance around waving my tail. Because I spot the bouncers bearing down on us from the rear of the tavern.

"Out you go, you freaks!" screams the bartender. "I don't know who you are or what you are, but I don't want a gang of monstrosities in my joint!"

"Who else would come into this dump?" I want to know.

And that is the signal for the riot.

IT is very hard to remember details. I can recall Gorilla Gabface swinging by his long arms from the chandeliers and making sounds like King Kong after a bad night. I remember Dime-Mouth McCarthy biting a bartender's toupee off with his horse-teeth. I have an impression of Subconscious Sigmund running along the top of the bar with his baby legs and hitting people in the head with ash trays. I myself am plenty busy kicking out at faces with my hind legs.

But it is Josephine who gives everybody the biggest surprise. She begins to hurl bottles and glasses at bartenders, and her shots never miss. Naturally—because she is now actually as good a marksman as Annie Oakley.

The rest is just a mess. We fight our way out to the street at last, in triumph. And in a Black Maria. Because somebody calls the cops, and we run right into a patrol wagon.

Twenty minutes later we are all lined up at night court in front of Magistrate Donglepootzer.

Hiawatha Donglepootzer is an old fudge of a judge who I tangle with long, long ago. He is a very grim sort of personality with a mind like a calen-

dar—in fact all he can seem to talk about is "thirty days" or "six months" or "five years at hard labor."

And from the minute he sets eyes on us, I can tell he is ready to give Father Time a real workout.

The sergeant that books us steps up and reads the charges.

"Assault and battery. Disorderly conduct. Contributing to the delinquency of minors. Indecent exposure. Your Honor, it's all the work of these people here."

Magistrate Donglepootzer peers over his high desk. He peers again. He takes off his glasses, wipes them, and puts them on. Then he takes off his glasses and throws them away.

"People," he whispers. "What people?"

"Why these here people, Your Honor."

"I don't see any people," snarls Donglepootzer. "I see a young lady, yes. She is wearing cowboy pants but I imagine she is a young lady. I hope so anyway. And the others—"

Donglepootzer sighs.

"The others," he says, "I can't seem to classify. There is a child, yes. A child with a cigar. And a gorilla. And the other two seem to be parts of a horse, cut in half. Except that one of them has a human body and a human face. Though not a very human face."

He is speaking to me, and I resent it.

"Now, then," he tells the sergeant, "would you mind explaining those those charges once more?"

"Well, it's this way, Your Honor. The lady comes into the bar alone and asks if anybody sees a magician with a magic wand."

"Drunk and disorderly, eh?" says Donglepootzer. "Continue."

"Then the next thing you know, this horse—or man—or half and half thing—comes in and stands next to her. And all at once this cigar-smoking baby is with them. They stand there, drinking—"

"The baby, too?" asks Donglepootzer.

"Yes, The baby has a bottle of gin. And the horse-man is drinking whiskey three shots at a time and talking to the lady. It is quite a party, they tell me."

"I can imagine it," sighs Donglepootzer. "But I don't want to."

"Then all at once the customers find this gorilla in a booth, drinking with the front half of a horse—"

"Must you talk that way?" groans Donglepootzer.

"But it's the truth, Your Honor. Then the fight starts and the baby hits a bartender in the head with an ashtray. You ought to hear the baby cursing—"

"Stop!" yells Donglepootzer. "I can't stand any more!"

"But—"

"Never mind. I believe all the charges. Now, before I lock you all up forever, is there anything you can possibly say to explain this—this nightmare?"

I MAKE up my mind in a hurry. There is only one way out and that is to tell the truth. I clear my throat and step up.

"I will explain, Your Honor," I tell him. "To begin with, it is all a mistake. There is nothing wrong with any of us."

Donglepootzer closes his eyes.

"Good—good God!" he whispers. "Nothing wrong with you?

"Of course not. This gentleman over there is Dime-Mouth McCarthy. He is a gentleman and a scholar."

"You mean the front half of a horse?" asks Donglepootzer.

"But that's just it. He's not a real horse."

"He looks real. I'm a pretty fair

judge of horse-flesh myself. Offhand, I'd say he was a mudder."

"No children at all," I tell him. "It is just a masquerade costume he wears. He has the front end and I have the rear end. Sort of fifty-fifty."

"Is that true, McCarthy?" booms the Magistrate, looking at him. Of course Dime-Mouth cannot answer. He just tosses his mane and neighs. A horrid sound.

"Are you giving me the horselaugh?" snarls Donglepootzer.

"Don't mind him, Your Honor. He's just feeling his oats."

"Yes," adds Josephine. "After all, he's drinking a lot, you understand. Like the old saying. You can lead a horse to water, but he'd rather have whiskey."

"I don't want any of your old sayings," groans Donglepootzer. "I want some new facts. What next? I suppose you'll try and tell me that gorilla isn't a gorilla."

"Certainly not," I grin. "That is Mr. Gabface who runs the pool hall. Don't you recognize him?"

"But he looks like an anthropoid—"

"He forgets to shave today," I explain.

Donglepootzer blinks. "All right," he murmurs. "All right. Now—about that baby. The one that drinks gin and hits bartenders and curses."

"He's not a baby. He's Subconscious Sigmund the psychiatrist."

"That baby is a psychiatrist?"

"Sure. Don't you ever hear of a child psychiatrist?"

Donglepootzer starts to tremble.

"But he's a baby—a mere babe in arms."

"Who is a baby, sir?" lisps Subconscious Sigmund. "I'll hwave you know I am an eminwent pfychiatric authworitwy, wif a Ph.D. and a graduate cwertificate fwom the beft colleges in the cwountry. And you, sir, are a clear cafe of dementwia pwaecox!"

He blows smoke in Donglepootzer's eyes.

"Maybe I'm crazy after all," he mutters. "I never expect such language from a baby. Confess — you're a midget in disguise, aren't you?"

"Of course." Subconscious Sigmund plays up to him.

"And this is all a practical joke. You people are just wearing costumes, as you say?" Donglepootzer is almost pleading. He wants to believe it for the sake of his own sanity.

"That's it exactwly!" lisps Subconscious Sigmund, through his baby bonnet. Then he lets out a sudden wail. "Oh gwacious! I think I will need to be changed!"

"Have you got a diaper handy, Your Honor?" asks Josephine.

THAT does it.

Donglepootzer jumps up.

"Eminent psychiatrist, eh?" he shrieks. "A psychiatrist who needs a change of diapers! And a gorilla who scratches himself for fleas; and two ends of a horse—the front end can't talk but the rear end can!

"Lock them up!" he yells at the sergeant. "Lock them up and throw away the keys!"

The cops advance on us. The jig is up. The hour of doom is at hand.

The hour of ——

Just then the clock over the desk begins to strike.

"Midnight!" I whisper.

And—it happens.

All in a moment. Subsconscious Sigmunds lets out a yelp and slips from Josephine's arms. He is growing—bigger and bigger. Suddenly he stands there, a normal man, in his baby costume.

I look at Gorilla Gabface and Dime-

Mouth McCarthy. They are slipping out of their costumes. My own costume falls away.

"You see?" I yell at Magistrate Donglepootzer. "We're all right. It's you who must be crazy."

With a wild scream, Donglepootzer jumps off the bench and runs out of the room.

"Go away," he yells. "Go far away. Get out!"

This is excellent advice to follow. We take it. On the lam.

"Like Cinderella, Lefty," Dime-mouth tells me. "Youse see? I am right when I compare our masquerade to Cinderella's brawl. We change back at midnight. That is what Herr Tonic does to us with his magic wand or whatever. Changes us until midnight only."

"Then the folks at the ball must be returned to normal too," Josephine says.

Subconscious Sigmund nods. "Of course," he says. "I must apologize for this nasty trick on the part of my friend Herr Tonic. Of course he is a real wizard and able to perform such feats. But he would not do such a thing unless he were drunk and insulted. Just bad temper on his part."

"We will forget him," I say. "But what a night! I need a drink before I turn in."

"Let's stop here," suggests Josephine, pointing out a cafe. We go in.

Standing at the bar, high as next next year's taxes, is our old wonder-working friend, Herr Tonic.

"There he is!" I whisper. "Let's get him!"

We sneak up very quietly. He doesn't have a chance.

I get his wand. The others hold his arms and legs.

"What are you doing?" he splutters.

"Never mind," I say, very grim. "Two can play at this magic game."

So I make up my mind and wave the wand. Then I break it over my knee.

"What are you doing?" Subconscious Sigmund gasps.

"This is too dangerous to have around," I tell him. "And especially in the hands of a foreigner with a bad temper. He should be interned anyway because he is not a citizen."

"He certainly isn't—any more," says Josephine.

And he isn't. We take him outside. The others go home and I dispose of Herr Tonic and come in here for breakfast. But what a night!

LEFTY FEEP sat back and mopped his forehead.

"Quite a remarkable adventure," I agreed. "No wonder you are touchy about mentioning horses. I'd say you had a real kick coming."

Feep winced.

"But there's one thing you forgot to mention," I told him. "You say you caught this magician, Herr Tonic, and took his wand away and broke it."

"Right."

"But before you broke it, you waved the wand at him."

"Also right."

"Tell me, Lefty," I said, fixing him with an accusing stare, "Just what did you turn him into?"

Feep blushed.

"I am afraid you ask me that," he said. "But I suppose I might as well admit it. We get Her Tonic down, and then Dime-Mouth McCarthy and I put the horse costume on him. Complete. And I wave the wand over him."

"You mean to tell me Herr Tonic is now a horse?" I gasped.

Lefty Feep shrugged.

"Well, if he isn't," he chuckled, "then the glue factory I just sold him to will be awfully disappointed!"

TINK FIGHTS The GREMLINS

By

WILLIAM P. McGIVERN



THE interior of the small London flat was bright and cheerful. Strong northern light came in the wide, uncurtained windows and fell in regular patterns across the plain furnishings and the dozens of half-finished paintings which were stacked about the floor and hung from every wall of the high-ceilinged room.

A tall, dark-haired man in a painter's smock stood in the center of the room studying intently an easel on which a half-completed painting of three roses was spread. He held a pipe in one hand and there was a curious, puzzled expression on his face as he studied the painting.

Tink, Jing and Nastee, the three New York leprechauns, were sitting on the edge of the easel, watching him with bright interested eyes.

"I think he's terribly handsome," Jing said.

She was sitting between Tink and Nastee, but she had edged over as close to Tink as possible. Nastee's sour little face was cupped in his hands and his lips were pressed in a thin dissatisfied line.

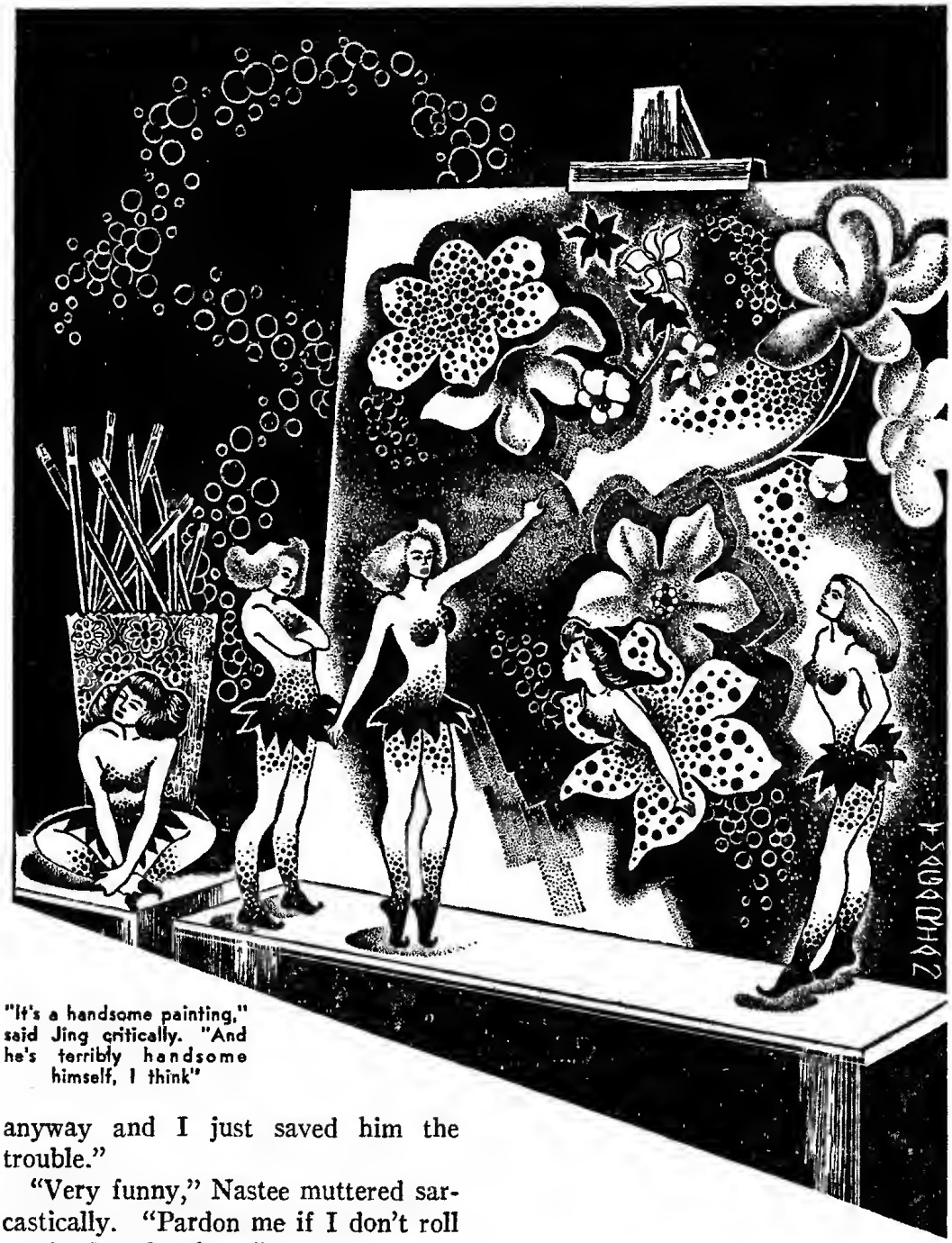
"You would!" he said disgustedly.

"What's the matter with you, Nastee?" Tink asked. "You're even more bitter today than usual."

"Mind your own business," Nastee snapped.

Jing giggled. "He's still mad at you for dumping him into that well in Ireland."

"Well," Tink grinned, "it was Saturday night, wasn't it? He needed a bath



"It's a handsome painting," said Jing critically. "And he's terribly handsome himself, I think"

anyway and I just saved him the trouble."

"Very funny," Nastee muttered sarcastically. "Pardon me if I don't roll on the floor laughing."

"You shouldn't hold grudges like that," Jing said. "After all, that happened months ago."

"By the way," Tink said, looking at Nastee with a sudden suspicion, "where have you been since then? You showed up here only a week ago. And how did you know where to find us?"

Tink and Jing and Nastee didn't want trouble, but these gremlins were fighting on the wrong side in the war, so they acted

Nastee grinned maliciously.

"Wouldn't you like to know," he jeered. "You two may think you're pretty smart, but you may be singing another tune before long."

Tink's face was serious as he glanced at Jing.

"I don't like the sound of that," he whispered worriedly. "Nastee sounds like he's got something up his sleeve."

"Oh, he's just talking," Jing said. "Don't pay any attention to him. Anyway, he couldn't cause any harm here."

"I know," Tink said thoughtfully, "but that's just why I'm anxious."

THEIR conversation was interrupted by a knock at the door. The young painter, with a last worried look at his half-finished painting, crossed the room and opened the door.

A slim, dark-haired girl in the trim uniform of the Ferry Command was standing in the doorway. She smiled happily into the young painter's incredulous face.

"Ann Masterson!" he exclaimed. "What are you doing here?"

Still smiling, the girl saluted smartly and straightened her slim, square shoulders. "Reporting for duty, Lieutenant Diggles," she said.

"Well, I'll be damned," the young painter said dazedly.

He took her by the shoulders and shook her gently.

"What are you doing in that uniform? And how did you know I was a lieutenant?" he asked.

"Oh, Tom," the girl said excitedly, "I've got a thousand things to tell you. But I'm so happy about seeing you I hardly know where to begin." She grinned into his still incredulous eyes. "Aren't you going to ask me to come in?"

"Why—why sure," the young painter said. He stepped aside and the girl walked into the room, glancing quickly about with a pleased little smile on her lips. "Why it's lovely here," she said, turning to him. "It's almost like your studio in New York."

"Light's not quite so good," he said. He was still staring at her unbelievingly. "Now break down and tell me everything," he said, "or I'll forget my chivalric background and spank the daylights out of you, uniform or not."

The girl grinned mischievously and pirouetted on slim ankles.

"Isn't it stunning," she said breathlessly. She stopped and smoothed the trim, pencil-slim skirt with proud hands. "I wouldn't trade it for a genuine Schiaparelli," she said with sudden seriousness.

"I can imagine," Tom Diggles said with just a touch of irony. "You girls all love uniforms."

"That's not fair, Tom," Ann said. "You should realize that we are proud of what our uniforms symbolize and that's all. But I see you haven't changed since New York. You still think girls in uniform are just romantic exhibitionists, don't you?"

Tom Diggles shrugged and said, "It doesn't make much difference what I think. But it isn't girls in uniform I mind. It's just that most of them are so light-headed and incompetent that it drives you crazy."

"Oh, you're impossible," Ann said, turning away from him with an angry whirl of her skirts. "You've got a medieval attitude about women that will never change. You think we should be locked away in cloisters and spend our time doing lace work, and let the great big strong men run the world and make all the decisions."

"That's not what I think at all," Tom said heatedly. "Like every woman, you twist and distort everything I say until the original thought is unrecognizable.

You bring two things to every argument, a closed mind and an open mouth. There are a thousand important things for the woman of today to do, but running around in uniforms, getting in the way of vital work, is not one of them."

"Well regardless of what you think," Ann said coolly, "I have been assigned to an aircraft maintenance corps, and my first official duty in London is to bring you these orders from Colonel Langley, of the First Bomber Command."

SHE drew a sheaf of sealed papers from a leather pouch at her waist and handed them to the young man.

"And I hope they're sending you to Iceland," she said bitterly. "I understand the Eskimo women don't wear uniforms and do nothing more dramatic than chew whale blubber all day. You'll love it there."

The young man glanced at the unopened orders and then looked up at the girl, and there was an unwilling smile tugging at the corners of his mouth.

"I see you still adore me," he grinned. He put a hand under her chin and tilted her head up slightly.

"I'm sorry for acting like a boor," he said quietly, and he was no longer smiling. "My reception of a fellow American in London wasn't very warm, was it?"

"No," the girl said, "it wasn't. You did everything but throw me down the steps."

"Let's not fight any more," the young man said. "There's enough fighting going on in the world today without our making every chance meeting another all-out battle." He looked out the window and his eyes were serious as he watched a crew of men filling in a huge bomb crater in the middle of the street. The sun was strong and clean and the air was touched with the first breath of spring, but still the signs of war and death were visible on London's face.

"The Nazis have brought a taste of Hell to the world," he said quietly, "and things will never be right again until the last one is exterminated. But, in the meantime," he shrugged and turned away from the window, "let's put an armistice to our private little war, shall we?"

"Of course," the girl said gently.

The young man smiled at her and then opened his orders. He read them quickly and when he finished he shook his head disgustedly.

"What's the matter?" the girl asked. She grinned slightly. "Iceland?"

"Nope," the young man said. "Just a notice that I'm to be engaged in aerial reconnaissance for the next few months." He folded the orders and shoved them into his pocket with a bitter gesture. "I've been begging to be assigned to an active bomber command for six months, and this is what I get."

"You're luckier than most," Ann said. "You've seen quite a bit of excitement already. Think of the poor boys who haven't had any fun at all."

THE young man looked at her and his lips tightened ominously.

"My dear," he said gently, "you and I just signed a peace pact, and I am most anxious to keep it. But if you don't want hostilities renewed, please stop referring to the fun and excitement of aerial duty over Europe. I can assure you there is no fun connected with the work. It's hard and tough, and half the time your heart's in your mouth, which isn't a very pleasant sensation."

"But you are all anxious to be assigned to that kind of work," Ann protested.

"We want to be in a spot where we make the Nazis bleed and burn," the young man said quietly. "All of us have memories of comrades shot down, friends killed in bombing raids, and we're out to settle that score. Not because it's fun, but because it has to be done, and the sooner it's done, the sooner this world will return to something like normalcy. And," he added with something of his old grin, "the sooner we can get our women out of uniforms and back in front of stoves where they belong."

"Let's not start all that again," Ann said. "And anyway, a lot of women I know don't belong in front of stoves. If you ever tasted my biscuits you'd know what I mean."

"I guess you're right," Tom said, with a grin. "Okay, cease firing. Anyway," he sighed, "maybe I'll get another crack at my kind of action when I finish this assignment."

"Everything's important, you know," Ann said. "After all, where would the bombers be without aerial reconnaissance?"

"You're right," Tom said. "There's no point in griping. And I've been laid up here so long now that I should take anything and be thankful."

"How long have you been on the sick list?" Ann asked.

"Almost two months," Tom said. "I got my final okay from the medicos last week, so I expected my orders along pretty soon. But," he smiled, "I didn't expect such a charming courier."

"Well," Ann said, "this really wasn't my job. I'm attached to aircraft maintenance, but I heard the colonel giving these orders to the regular courier, so I just took over the job."

"I'm glad you did," Tom said. "This is just like old times, isn't it?" He glanced over his shoulder at his uncompleted painting. "I would have gone crazy if I hadn't these paintings to work on. None of them are particularly good but they keep me occupied. This one here," he said pointing to the easel on which the painting of the roses was spread, "has got me stumped."

He took the girl by the arm and led her to the easel.

"What's wrong with it?" she asked.

"Well for one thing it isn't finished," Tom smiled. "But it seems to change during the night. I work as long as there's light, but the next morning there seems to be something—" He shook his head and laughed. "I guess I am losing my mind."

Tink nudged Jing.

"I told you last night you'd better stop dabbling with this painting."

"I didn't do much," Jing said. "I just changed the colors a bit. Anyway," she added defensively, "I know more about flowers than any old painter."

Nastee was staring gloomily at the young man and now he said jeeringly, "Isn't that a touching sight?"

TINK looked and saw that he had slipped his arm about the girl's slim waist and she had leaned her dark head against his shoulder.

"I think that's wonderful," Jing said softly.

"Bah!" Nastee said. "If I needed anything to make me feel completely happy about my new job, this is it."

"New job?" Ting asked. He looked suspiciously at the sour-pussed little leprechaun. "What new job? I thought there was something funny about your absence. Come on, out with it. What kind of a new job have you got?"

"Wouldn't you like to know?" Nastee sneered.

"Yes, I would," Tink said grimly. "And if you don't open up, I'll look around for another well to toss you in."

Nastee wriggled uneasily.

"It's none of your business," he said.

"I think I'm going to make it my business," Tink said.

The young lieutenant turned and brushed his lips across the girl's soft cheek.

"I think a lot about you, Ann," he murmured. "I sometimes dream a bit about—later."

"What sort of dreams?" the girl asked quietly.

"Very silly ones, I guess," Tom said, with a short laugh. "I dream of this mess ending and me heading back to the United States and finding you just as lovely as you are now waiting—"

"Waiting for what?" the girl asked, and her voice was only a whisper in the room.

"For me," Tom said. He laughed without humor. "That's where the dream gets rather silly."

The girl turned slowly and looked into his eyes, earnestly.

"Not so silly, Tom," she said softly.

The young lieutenant looked at her for an instant, then he took her in his arms and held her close.

"I can't believe it," he murmured, his lips pressed against her hair.

Nastee squirmed and looked away.

"Will I be glad to put an end to that," he said.

"How are you going to put an end to it?" Tink asked.

"You're getting nosey again," Nastee smirked.

The young lieutenant looked down at the girl and smiled.

"I'll come back, dear," he said.

"Oh, be careful, Tom," the girl said anxiously. "I'll be worrying for you every second."

"Don't be a silly little goose," the lieutenant laughed. "I've got nothing to worry about but the gremlins."

"The gremlins?" Ann laughed. "I've heard about them. You don't take them seriously, do you?"

"Of course not. But the English lads are different. They'll tell you a thousand stories to prove that there are actually little creatures maliciously tampering with their planes. But it's just a silly superstition."

Nastee laughed unpleasantly.

"That's what you think," he sneered.

CHAPTER II

TINK looked searchingly at Nastee. The ugly, bitter little leprechaun had an expression of unholy triumph on his face that was unsettling. Whenever Nastee looked so gloatingly happy, Tink knew that trouble was brewing.

"What do you mean by that?" he asked. He knew that the humans couldn't hear their voices, so he didn't bother to speak softly.

Nastee chuckled.

"You'll find out soon enough," he said, hopping to his feet. "And he will too," he added, pointing one tiny finger at the young lieutenant.

"Nastee!" Tink cried, in a shocked voice. "Have you joined the gremlins?"

Nastee assumed an expression of outraged innocence.

"What a thing to accuse me of?" he cried.

Tink knew from his attitude that he was guilty.

"So you did," he said grimly.

"I don't know what you're talking about," Nastee said haughtily.

"Nastee, you're lying," Tink snapped. "You've joined the gremlins and you intend to sabotage the lieutenant's reconnaissance plane, don't you?"

Nastee turned on him, scowling.

"And supposing I am," he snarled. "What difference does that make to you?"

Jing looked at him in shocked horror.

"I don't believe you could be that bad, Nastee," she said.

"Nastee," Tink said, "you're going to get yourself in a lot of trouble if you join the gremlins. You know they're an unsociable, unreliable, treacherous group of little imps."

"I like them," Nastee said. "They're grouchy all the time. They never laugh or smile. They make people unhappy. They're wonderful."

"They sound dreadful," Jing said.

"How long have you been a member?" Tink asked.

"About three weeks," Nastee said.

"And you came here about three weeks ago," Tink said keenly. "You were assigned to this job by the gremlins, weren't you? You came here in advance to spy on the lieutenant, didn't you?"

"Sure I did," Nastee said.

"You ungrateful little imp," Tink said disgustedly.

Nastee looked angry. His little face was screwed into a frown.

"I don't care what names you call me," he said spitefully. "I've got a job I like and I'm going to keep it. And I won't have you two around getting in the way of my work."

WITH a last indignant glance he swung over the edge of the easel and slid down one of its legs to the floor. He crossed the floor to the open window and climbed to the ledge. He looked back at them and laughed bitterly. Then he was gone.

"Oh, Tink," Jing cried, "what are we going to do? This nice young man will be killed if we don't stop Nastee and the gremlins." She looked away from Tink to the young girl who was sighing happily in the lieutenant's arms, and her eyes clouded with tears. "And that would break this poor girl's heart."

"I know, I know," Tink said irritably. "We've got to do something, but what?"

"Couldn't we warn the lieutenant to be on his guard?" Tink suggested hopefully.

Tink shook his head.

"There's only one thing to do," he said finally. He swung around and faced Jing. His little eyes were gleaming with determination. "It may be dangerous, but it's our only chance. Are you game?"

"Oh, yes," Jing cried.

"We're going with the lieutenant," Tink snapped. "We'll go along as his bodyguard, and I'd just like to see Nastee or the gremlins start anything."

Jing clapped her hands together excitedly.

"Oh, Tink," she cried, "you're wonderful!"

Tink smiled modestly.

"That thought has often occurred to me," he said. . . .

THE London airport from which Lieutenant Tom Diggles was taking off, was a large, dark area, with only a few blue landing lights visible.

Tink and Jing arrived there a few days after they had decided to help the young lieutenant. They had heard nothing of Nastee since that time, and Tink knew in this case, that silence meant trouble.

They found the reconnaissance ship that the lieutenant was flying and went aboard. Tink left Jing in the cabin while he searched the ship. He looked thoroughly, diving into every nook and cranny but he found no evidence of Nastee or the gremlins.

"Everything looks all right," he said, when he returned to the cabin. "Maybe Nastee gave up his idea."

"I think we'd better go along, just in case," Jing said.

They were waiting in the cabin, sit-

ting on a rheostat of the dashboard when Lieutenant Diggles came aboard. He was wearing his heavy, fur-lined leather flying togs and his face was serious as he rapidly checked the instruments.

The plane was a two-engined ship with a large cabin, and a special turret in the top for the cameraman. He arrived a few minutes later, a lanky redhead, carrying a heavy camera under his arm.

"Hi, Tom," he greeted the pilot.

"Hello, Red," Tom Diggles smiled. "Got everything you'll need?"

Red patted his camera affectionately and said, "With this baby I don't need anything else. If you could manage to fly over Hitler's mountain resort I'll tell you what he's having for breakfast."

"If I ever fly over Berchtesgaden, I hope it's not to take pictures," Tom said.

"Me, too," Red said fervently. "I'd like to be sitting right alongside the bombardier, watching those block busters land right in Mr. Hitler's lap."

Tom looked out the glazed window and then said, "Well, I guess we're ready to go." He signalled with his hand to the ground crew and a few seconds later the great motors thundered to life. The ship trembled for an instant and then was rolling smoothly down the runway, gathering speed with every foot.

The lieutenant pulled the stick back slowly and the ship lifted into the air, dropped momentarily and then soared upward again in a steady climb.

Tom grinned at Red and, over the noise of the motor, said, "We're on our way."

Red closed his fist and pointed his thumb in the air with a wink.

The lieutenant turned back to his controls, and Tink and Jing settled down for the trip.

"How long do you think we'll be gone?" Jing asked.

"Just a few hours," Tink said. "We'll cross the channel, fly over France and then return. Shouldn't take long at all."

They flew steadily for several moments gaining altitude, and then they saw the wide, bright ribbon of the Thames gleaming beneath them, beautifully silvered with moonlight.

When they reached about thirty-five thousand feet the lieutenant levelled off and headed directly east. The cabin was cold, and despite the automatic oxygen device the air was almost too thin to breathe.

Jing hugged herself and nestled closer to Tink.

"I don't like this," she said through chattering teeth.

LIEUTENANT DIGGLES glanced at his instruments and a worried frown settled on his face. He joggled a small switch several times, then shoved his goggles up to his forehead and glanced out the window.

"What's the matter?" Red asked.

The lieutenant shrugged helplessly.

"Can't tell for sure. We're losing altitude. I think the de-icers are on the blink. It's okay unless we run into real weather, then we'll be out of luck."

Jing looked at Tink and raised her slim eyebrows significantly.

"Are you thinking what I am?" she asked.

Tink nodded thoughtfully.

"I think it's about time for me to go to work," he said. "If the de-icers on this plane aren't working, I'll bet anything Nastee's behind the trouble."

"Where are the de-icer's?" Jing asked.

"Out on the wings," Tink said.

"Well how're you going to get out there?"

"Very simple," Tink said. "Watch."

He scampered up the instrument panel and jumped into the breech of the machine gun. Using all of his strength he dislodged a cartridge and crawled into the small dark shell chamber. Then he slipped into the barrel of the gun and crawled along its two-foot length until he reached its open end.

The cold, lashing wind that whipped past him almost tore his head off, but he fought his way on, until he was able to drop from the gun to the cowling and then to the broad surface of the wing, dangerously slick from its coating of ice.

He ran along the wing until he reached the de-icer apparatus and there, crouching in the lee of the equipment, he found Nastee, curled up in a small, cold ball.

His eyes were closed and his teeth were chattering. And he was oblivious to everything except his own discomfort.

Tink kicked him with his foot.

"What's the idea?" he demanded.

Nastee blinked his frost-laden eyes open and stared with incredulous amazement at Tink.

"How'd you get here?" he sputtered.

"That's beside the point," Tink said. "What have you done to the de-icers on this plane?"

In spite of his frozen discomfort, Nastee managed to smile triumphantly.

"Wouldn't you like to know!" he said. He chuckled gleefully. "I suppose we'll be forced to land pretty soon, won't we?"

Tink shook his head, then smiled at Nastee's bewilderment.

"No," he said, "we won't have to land. I just heard the pilot say he can get along without the di-icers if the weather doesn't get worse. And that seems rather unlikely."

It was Nastee's turn to chortle.

"That's what you think," he laughed. "But I just talked to a gremlin scout and he said we're heading into a storm within fifty miles. And the temperature is due to drop about fifty degrees."

"You're lying," Tink said.

"All right, then," Nastee said smugly, "there's nothing to worry about if I'm lying. You just go on back to the cabin and relax."

TINK knew that Nastee wasn't lying. And he knew that if they flew into bad weather, their plane would be forced to drop within range of German anti-aircraft guns.

"You always think you're so smart," Nastee jeered. "I suppose you came along to stop me from doing my work. Well what are you going to do?"

Tink stared angrily at Nastee.

"I don't know, yet," he snapped, "But get this; this plane isn't going to crash in France!"

Nastee laughed spitefully.

"We'll see about that," he said.

CHAPTER III

TINK returned to the cabin and told Jing what had happened.

"But what can you do?" Jing asked, when he finished. "If we're flying into a cold storm and the de-icers aren't working, we'll be shot down, won't we?"

Tink nodded somberly.

"We wouldn't have a chance," he said.

"Could you fix the de-icers?" Jing asked.

"No. I don't know anything about them. And you can bet that Nastee's done a thorough job of wrecking them."

"But we've got to do something," Jing said worriedly.

Tink snapped his fingers suddenly He glanced up at the lieutenant's lean, serious features and then his eyes

shifted to the dashboard. There was a speculative expression on his face.

Jing watched him anxiously.

"Did you think of something to do?" she asked.

"I think I've got it," Tink said. "We've got to dodge that storm or we don't have a chance."

Jing's slim eyebrows drew together in a frown.

"But how can you do that?" she asked.

"We're flying east now," Tink said, speaking quickly. "In a few more minutes, we'll hit the storm. Before we do I've got to make our pilot swing south. That will take us out of the storm area." He glanced at the dashboard again, a bright, beaming light in his eyes.

Jing shook her head helplessly.

"But how are you going to do that?" she asked.

"Watch," Tink said quietly.

He crawled across the dial-pitted surface of the dashboard until he reached the compass, and then he went to work, his tiny dexterous fingers working with swift sureness. When he crept back to Jing's side there was a pleased expression of triumph on his merry face.

"What did you do?" Jing asked breathlessly.

"Wait and see," Tink said.

Lieutenant Tom Diggles was glancing out the window, squinting into the steadily thickening snow flurries that eddied about the plane, and there was a worried frown on his face. The frown deepened when he turned to the temperature gauge.

"I think we're in for it," he said to Red over his shoulder. "This weather is thickening and it's getting colder. We're dropping pretty fast." He shook his head bitterly. "If only those damn de-icers weren't on the blink."

"Don't blame our ground crews," Red said, shaking his head ominously. "This looks like the gremlins' work."

"Nonsense," the lieutenant said irritably. "That's just a childish superstition."

"Don't bet on that," Red said gloomily. "I've seen some mighty queer things happen up here that weren't caused by any human factor."

"Rubbish," the lieutenant said.

HE GLANCED down again at the dashboard and suddenly the expression on his face changed to one of complete astonishment.

"Well I'll be damned!" he said loudly.

"What's the matter?" Red said, leaving his turret and coming up to the lieutenant's side.

The lieutenant was still staring at the dashboard with bewildered incredulity.

"I should be taken out and tossed in the Thames," he said finally. He pointed emphatically at the compass. "Look at that! I'm a full ninety degrees off course. No wonder we're heading into blizzard weather. We're going straight north."

"No!" Red said dazedly.

He stared at the compass, his lean features blank with astonishment.

"But how could that happen?" he said.

"Search me," the lieutenant said sourly. "I guess I'm just the world's worst navigator." He kicked the right rudder and moved the stick slowly, bringing the ship about in a sharp right angle bank. The needle of the compass swung around to E and he straightened the plane out.

"That's better," he said. "Now we're on course again and with a little luck we'll flank this heavy weather."

Tink was smiling triumphantly at Jing.

"You see?" he said. "We're out of trouble."

"But I don't see how," Jing said.

"Simple. I threw the compass off ninety degrees. We were heading east but the compass showed north. When the lieutenant corrected the position to east we actually turned due south." So, Tink grinned, "we're heading south now, toward warm weather. The plane won't need de-icers in a little while."

Jing clapped her hands together with pleasure.

"Why, that's wonderful!" she cried.

Tink smiled modestly. "It was clever," he admitted with only a shade of reluctance.

But an hour later as the plane continued to wing its way south at high speed his cheerfulness faded slightly. The weather was warmer but soupy and thick and the lieutenant was flying on instruments, getting farther off course every minute.

"I don't know what to do now," Tink confessed worriedly to Jing. "I don't know where we are. And the lieutenant still thinks he's flying on course. We may run out of gas and be too far from London to return."

The lieutenant was scowling anxiously at his instruments and finally he turned to Red and said, "Something's a bit wrong. I think we're off course. I'm going to drop down and see if we can't pick out a landmark."

The plane started down through the dense massed clouds, the altimeter needle swinging dizzily as the plane slanted groundward.

Red's loud incredulous voice suddenly broke the tense silence.

"It ain't possible!" he cried. "My eyes are playing tricks on me."

"What's the matter?" the lieutenant demanded.

"We're over water!" Red cried shrilly.

"That's impossible," the lieutenant snapped.

"Maybe so," Red said dolefully, "but if that stuff below us ain't water, it's a darn good imitation."

THE lieutenant straightened the plane out and then scrambled to the side and peered down. He swallowed abruptly.

"You're right," he said in a shaken voice. "It *is* water."

"Then where the hell are we?" Red asked helplessly. "This sure ain't Europe unless they been having a lot of rain."

The lieutenant was staring at a mistily outlined shore line, and when he turned to Red, his face was pale.

"Red," he said, in an odd, brittle, voice, "we're over the Mediterranean, heading for Africa!"

"What!" Red stared at the lieutenant and his adam's-apple bobbed rhythmically. He pointed feebly at the dashboard. "We can't be!" he cried. "The compass says we're heading east."

"The compass in on the fritz," the lieutenant said tersely.

"Oh my God!" Red said weakly. "More gremlin trouble."

"Stop babbling about gremlins," the lieutenant said. "This is a mechanical breakdown, nothing else. And we're in a mighty tough spot."

"Well what're we going to do?" Red asked.

"There's only one thing we *can* do," the lieutenant answered. "We haven't enough gas to make London, and if we return to the French coast, we'll be captured and dumped into a German prison camp. We've got to try for Africa and hope we can find an allied airfield to land on."

"Yeah, but there's lots of Nazi airfields in Africa," Red said, "especially along the coast. How're we goin' to tell one from another?"

"Let's worry about that when we get

there," the lieutenant said.

Tink listened to this conversation in silent misery. He turned to Jing with sagging shoulders.

"I've certainly made a mess of things," he said dolefully.

"That's no way to feel," Jing said. "You saved them from the storm, didn't you? It isn't your fault that this other trouble came along."

"I know," Tink said miserably. "But that's not much consolation."

The sun was edging an orange shoulder over the horizon when they sighted the ragged coastline of Africa, and after a few more minutes they were able to make out the camouflaged site of an airfield.

"Maybe luck is with us," Red said jubilantly. "That looks like home-sweet-home to me."

"Maybe," the lieutenant said grimly. "If it isn't, we're too low on gas to do much scouting around."

They headed in over the airport at about five thousand feet, coming down out of the early sun to keep out of sight as long as possible.

"I can see some fighters warming up," Red said excitedly.

"Take a good look," the lieutenant said. "Are they ours?"

"Can't tell yet. Drop in a little closer."

"Okay," the lieutenant said. He shoved the stick forward slowly. "But make up your mind pretty fast. We'll be in their laps soon."

Red was standing in the turret peering downward, his eyes narrowed to thin slits as he strained to make out the insignia of the planes on the ground.

"I think I got 'em," he said.

"What's the verdict?"

"Start climbing," Red said tersely, turning from the turret. His voice was dull and flat as he said, "They're Focke-Wulf, 109's!"

"Judas Priest!" the lieutenant whispered softly.

HE JERKED the stick back into his stomach and gunned the ship, but there was an ominous sputter from the left engine as the plane took the extra gas.

"We're about through," he said. "Did they see us?"

"Can't tell," Red said. "They're still on the ground. But it's a cinch they heard us."

The lieutenant nursed the plane to eight thousand feet, but then the left engine conked, and a few seconds later the powerful throbbing of the second engine began to fade to a labored cough.

"We'll have to land," the lieutenant said. "Can't do much about it. It's the law of gravity."

They slanted down in a long sweeping dive that carried them toward a distant fringe of vegetation that marked the beginning of the trackless jungle wastes.

"I always wanted to do a little big game hunting," Red said, and his voice sounded hollow and loud in the unnatural quietness of the cabin.

"Then this is your chance," the lieutenant said.

At three thousand feet they were over the green carpet of jungle, heading inland at a dead speed of almost three hundred miles an hour.

"We're going to hit pretty hard, aren't we?" Red asked.

The lieutenant nodded. "Pretty hard. I'll try and break it as much as possible with a couple of short climbs, but it's going to be pretty hard."

Ten minutes later the fuselage of the plane was sweeping over the tops of the trees.

Tink took Jing's hand and held it tightly.

"We'll be all right," he said, "and

maybe we'll save the lieutenant and Red."

The lieutenant suddenly stood up and moved quickly toward the tail of the plane.

"Come on, Red," he said, speaking quickly. "This is it."

A moment later the plane scraped the tops of the highest trees, twisted slightly and then plowed straight ahead into a dense mass of foliage that snapped under its speed with a hissing scrape. It p l u n g e d groundward, sweeping a clean wide swash through the underbrush and finally settling with a rocking crash against the yielding mass of tangled jungle vines and foliage.

Brilliantly plumaged birds wheeled from nearby trees and circled the spot with high piercing screams of terror, before streaking away into the bright dawn. A curious unnatural silence gradually settled over the wreckage of the once-trim plane. . . .

CHAPTER IV

TINK held Jing tightly until the plane had come to its rocking swaying stop, then he looked down anxiously at the young lieutenant sprawled on the floor.

The young man wasn't hurt seriously. He had been thrown to the floor with the impact of the crash, but he was breathing, and even as Tink watched he raised himself with one hand and shook his head groggily.

The cameraman, Red, was lying farther toward the rear of the plane and his eyes were closed and his face was a deathly white. Tink saw that his left leg was buckled under him at a twisted, unnatural angle.

The lieutenant crawled slowly to his feet and stood upright, swaying slightly, his hands pressed to his forehead.

"Is he all right?" Jing whispered.

"He seems to be," Tink said, "but the other one has a broken leg, I think."

The lieutenant knelt beside Red and felt his pulse. Then, with a relieved expression on his face, he stood up and stumbled toward the door. He opened it with difficulty, and climbed down to the thick, soft carpeting of jungle underbrush.

The plane had fortunately landed in a small clearing and this had saved it from complete destruction. If it had crashed against one of the towering trees that bordered the clearing it would have been battered into a total wreck.

Tink and Jing followed the lieutenant outside.

"I wonder where Nastee is?" Jing asked.

"We probably won't see much of him," Tink said. "He'll be smart enough to keep out of my way for a while."

The y o u n g lieutenant staggered slowly to the middle of the clearing and looked helplessly about with bleak eyes. He put a hand to his forehead and shook his head slowly.

"He doesn't look very good," Jing said. "Isn't there something we could do for him?"

The lieutenant turned slowly and started back for the plane but he hadn't taken half a dozen steps before he staggered and dropped to one knee. He made an effort to rise, but his legs gave beneath him and he fell slowly forward on his face. He lay on the rotting floor of the jungle, motionless and inert, and for an instant Tink thought he was dead. But then he saw the slow, uneven rise and fall of his chest and he knew he still lived.

"Oh, the poor man," Jing cried. "We've got to do something for him."

They started across the clearing, but suddenly, to their left, a mighty rumbling roar sounded, and they froze in

their tracks. There was a heavy rustling in the tangled underbrush that enclosed the little clearing, and then a great head appeared over the top of the brush, its great mouth opened wide and another thunderous roar rocked the ground.

JING clung to Tink, trembling, as the underbrush parted and a mighty lion stalked slowly into the clearing, its red eyes intent on the motionless figure of the man lying on the ground.

"What is it?" she asked fearfully.

"I don't know," Tink said. "It's awful big, isn't it?"

The lion paused for a second on the edge of the clearing, its tail lashing slowly and its little eyes flicking alertly from side to side. Then it trotted slowly across the clearing toward the lieutenant's sprawled body.

"Come on," Tink said urgently.

"What are you going to do?" Jing said, and her voice was almost a wail.

"I—I don't know," Tink said. For once in his life he was completely stumped. Nothing in his experience had prepared him for a situation like this, but he knew he couldn't just stand by and watch the lieutenant be devoured by this great beast.

He started across the clearing running as fast as he could, but the lion reached the lieutenant before him. It paused for an instant sniffing the ground and then it put one huge paw on the lieutenant's shoulder and turned him over. A deep rumble sounded in his throat and his tail lashed ominously as its little red eyes stared into the man's white, still face.

Tink and Jing reached the lieutenant's side and Tink felt his courage deserting him as he stared incredulously at the size of the monstrous beast.

He took an involuntary step backward and something sharp jabbed painfully into his back.

"Ouch!" he cried.

He looked around and saw that he had bumped into a long, shiny thorn. He rubbed his back ruefully, and then a sudden idea occurred to him. He pulled the thorn from the ground and regarded it with speculative eyes. It was almost twice as long as he was, and its thin hard point was as sharp as a needle.

Jing was watching him anxiously.

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

Tink's jaw was set firmly.

"We're going to attack!" he said grimly.

"With thorns?" Jing asked incredulously.

"It's all we've got," Tink said. "But," he added, rubbing his back tenderly, "I think it might be enough."

He trotted toward the lion, and when he reached the beast's massive forepaw he extended the thorn like a lance and drove forward, head lowered, with all his strength.

The needle-sharp point dug into the lion's tender paw with all of Tink's weight behind it.

The lion roared and lifted the paw into the air. His little eyes flickered with rage. Jing had decided on a rear attack and as the lion stood irresolutely on three feet, glaring in baffled anger about the clearing, she drove a thorn into his hind paw.

THE lion wheeled, snarling wildly. His long tail lashed about and there were flecks of murderous rage in the close-set, red eyes. Tink backed slightly away and then dashed in again, imbedding the thorn in the same spot he had first attacked.

The lion turned and its giant paw flicked out blindly, tearing the thorn

from Tink's hand. The impetus of the blow dumped Tink to the ground a dozen feet away. He crawled to his feet, dazed and bruised, and limped back to the attack.

But the fight was over. Jing's second thrust drove in between the lion's claws and with a frightful roar the great beast



bounded from the clearing.

Tink hurried to Jing's side.

"Are you all right?" he asked anxiously.

Jing was smiling widely.

"I feel wonderful," she said. Her face sobered as she glanced at the young lieutenant who was stirring slightly. "What are we going to do with him?" she asked.

"I think he's all right," Tink said. "He just passed out from shock. When he comes to, he'll feel better."

The lieutenant opened his eyes slowly and then struggled to a sitting position. He passed a hand dazedly over his forehead.

"I must've blacked out," he muttered. "Childish thing to do." A frown creased his forehead. "I must've had a nightmare. I can still hear something ringing in my ears like a lion's roar."

He crawled slowly to his feet and glanced around.

"Just nerves, I guess," he muttered. "There's probably not a lion within a hundred miles."

Jing glanced at Tink and smiled.

The lieutenant returned to the plane and came out a few minutes later carrying Red's unconscious form. He stretched the young cameraman on the ground in the shade of the plane and loosened the tight collar. While he was holding a canteen of water to Red's lips the cameraman stirred and shook his head weakly from side to side. The water trickled down his neck.

"What's the idea?" he said, his voice a feeble whisper. But there was a faint grin at the edges of his pain-stiffened mouth.

"How do you feel?" the lieutenant asked quietly.

"Not so hot. I'd be better if you'd stop trying to drown me."

The lieutenant smiled. "Just saving you the bother of your Saturday night bath, that's all."

Red glanced around the clearing.

"Let's cut the comedy," he said. "Do we have any chance of getting out of here? Don't soften the blow. If we're sunk I can take it."

The lieutenant shrugged. "Can't say, yet. We may be within range of allied reconnaissance planes. If so, we've got a fair chance of being spotted and



The three leprechauns leaped to the attack

picked up."

"Doesn't sound too good to me," Red said. "That 'if' is a little too large. Now, how about my leg?"

"Is it bothering you much?"

Red grinned whitely.

"Not much."

"I can set it," the lieutenant said. "And a couple of these saplings around here will make fine splints. So you haven't got a thing to worry about."

"Wonderful," Red said. "And how much food and water have we got."

"Plenty," the lieutenant said. "Anyway," he added wryly, "we've got some."

"Fine," Red said. "Imagine! I thought we were in a tough spot and it turns out to be a flyer's Valhalla. Better get busy on this leg, Doctor. I've got a date with a blonde tonight."

"Right away," the lieutenant said.

THE two leprechauns had crept close to listen, and now Jing turned worriedly to Tink and said, "We've got to do something to help these poor men. They won't be able to stand it here more than a few days."

"That's right," Tink said, "but I don't know what to do. Do you think we could find our way to an allied air field?" He shook his head and answered his own question. "No, that wouldn't work."

"How long do you think they can last here?" Jing asked.

Tink looked up at the sky and shook his head.

"I don't know," he said moodily.

"Well, we simply can't disappoint that poor girl," Jing said heatedly. "She's expecting her lieutenant back and I intend to see that he gets back!"

BUT four days later Jing's confident resolve was fading with each passing hour. On the first day, an allied plane had flown overhead, but apparently the pilot hadn't seen the lieutenant's frantic signaling. Two days had passed since then, and there was no evidence of any rescue party.

"Oh, Tink," Jing said desperately, "we simply *must* do something!"

"But what?" Tink said. He glanced across the clearing to the small lean-to which the lieutenant had built for Red. The cameraman was resting fairly comfortably in its shade, his splinted leg propped up on a pillow of moss. But the food and water situation was becoming critical. Tink knew that the lieutenant hadn't been eating or drinking his share of the rations, but had given them to Red. Still there was only a crumb or two and a few drops of water left.

It was evening of the fourth day when they heard the sudden, out-of-place sound of a motor reverberating through the drowsy stillness of the jungle. And a few minutes later they could hear the dry crackle of underbrush and the bouncing, jogging noise of a truck as it plodded its way through the tangled trail.

The lieutenant appeared at the door of the plane, his face alight with hope. Red crawled out of his lean-to and waved joyfully at him.

"Pack my grips," he yelled. "I think I'm checking out of this hotel."

A second later the underbrush parted and the hood of a gray truck broke into the clearing. The truck stopped and the powerful cough of the motor faded into silence. A slim figure under a crash helmet slid from behind the wheel and dropped to the ground.

"Hello there, Lieutenant Diggles," a light voice called.

The lieutenant was staring at the slim driver with dazed, incredulous eyes.

"It's a mirage," he said hoarsely. "If

I shut my eyes it'll go away."

"No it won't. The air corps maintenance is a lot more substantial than you think," the light, clear voice said.

The driver pulled off the huge, cowled crash helmet and lustrous dark hair fell down in long waves. A pair of smiling eyes laughed at the lieutenant.

"Ann Masterson at your service, Lieutenant Diggles," the overalled driver said.

CHAPTER V

JING smiled happily as the lieutenant vaulted from the door of the plane and ran across the clearing to the girl's side.

"Darling!" he cried. "I can't believe it's really you."

He took her in his arms and kissed her impulsively.

Ann put her hands on his shoulders and pushed him slightly away.

"That should convince you," she laughed.

Red whistled approvingly.

"Lady," he yelled, "I don't believe in you, either. Come on over here and convince these poor old eyes of mine."

"And he doesn't mean eyes," the lieutenant said. He grinned and shook her gently. "Come on now, honey, give! How'd you get here?"

"It's very simple," Ann said. "The day after you left I received my orders, transferring me to an allied air base here in Tunisia. This was my first job. One of our reconnaissance planes spotted you two days ago and I was sent out with supplies and equipment. Our base is only about twenty-five miles from here, but I was the only one there the colonel could spare for this trip. It wasn't a bit dangerous, because all of this territory is controlled by the Allies and we have the entire region under constant aerial reconnaissance. I've been in radio contact with the base since I left this morning, so they know I found you."

She glanced at the plane with competent, experienced eyes.

"How are the chances of flying out?"

"Fair," the lieutenant said. "Provided you brought along the right parts, I can do the repairs."

"If it's a chance," the girl said, "we won't take it. I can pile you all in the truck and have you back at the base in eight hours."

The lieutenant glanced in Red's direction and then lowered his voice.

"We'll have to fly him out," he said. "He couldn't stand eight hours bouncing around in the back of a truck."

"I heard that," Red suddenly cried belligerently, "and it's a lot of nonsense. I'm not going to risk everybody's neck just so I can be flown out of here on a rubber mattress. We'll go back in the truck."

"We'll go back as I see fit," the lieutenant snapped. "I'm in command here."

"I'm sure I've got everything you'll need," the girl said. "But I don't know if I've got enough gas. I've got some, but it will be barely enough to get us from here to the base if we take the plane."

"Well, that's all we need," the lieutenant said.

"Shall we get to work on the repairs right away?" Ann said.

THE lieutenant ran a hand through his dark hair and his teeth flashed whitely against the black stubble of his four-day's beard.

"Dou you bring along anything to eat?" he asked wistfully.

"Why, certainly," Ann smiled. "I have some canned broth, sandwiches, a thermos of coffee and even a pint of whiskey."

"Stop it!" Red begged, holding both hands to his ears. "I can't bear to hear those things mentioned."

"I think we'd better eat first and then tackle our repair job," the lieutenant said.

Tink and Jing went aboard the plane while the lieutenant, Ann and Red were eating, and in one of the dark corners of the cabin Tink stumbled unexpectedly upon Nastee.

Nastee crouched in the corner as Tink stared down at him, hands resting belligerently on his hips.

"So," he said, "This is where you've been hiding."

"I haven't been hiding," Nastee said. He glanced warily from Tink to Jing. "You aren't mad at me, are you?" His eyes met Jing's in a mute plea for sympathy. "I froze my left ear out on that wing, you know."

"It serves you just right," Jing said. "Aren't you ashamed of all the trouble you've caused these poor people?"

Nastee started to reply, but Tink cut him short.

"Nastee isn't ashamed of anything he did," he said. "But he'd lie and say he was, to save his own skin. You're lucky everything's turned out all right or you'd have me on your neck for life, because this time I'm really mad."

"Did everything turn out all right?" Nastee asked cautiously.

"Yes," Tink said grimly. "A unit from an allied field just arrived with food and supplies. The plane will be ready to take-off in a day or so."

Nastee looked humbly at the floor.

"That's good," he said, sighing heavily.

"Cut it out," Tink said disguestedly. "Your acting isn't impressing anyone." He turned to Jing decisively. "While we have him here I think we ought to make sure he doesn't cause any more trouble. Let's lock him in the machine gun breech until we reach the allied field."

But Jing's eyes had softened as Nastee looked pleadingly at her.

"I think this time he's learned his lesson, Tink," she said. "Let's give him another chance."

"All right," Tink said grimly, "but no more monkey business or into the gun breech you go."

"I'll be good," Nastee said humbly.

"I doubt it," Tink said.

"You're just too callous, Tink," Jing said, coming to Nastee's defense.

Tink shrugged helplessly.

"Maybe the lieutenant was right," he muttered.

"About what?" Jing asked.

"About women in war time," Tink said. "They should be home baking bread while the men do the fighting."

Jing sniffed. "You're just as vain and unreasonable as all men."

"All right," Tink sighed, "let's don't argue about it."

THEY left the plane and started across the clearing where the lieutenant and the girl were packing away the remains of their lunch.

The jungle was quiet and there was only the whisper of a breeze moving the brush. Night was dropping quickly.

"It seems as if we're on another planet," Ann said, glancing about at the brooding darkness of the jungle. "It doesn't seem possible that there's another human within a thousand miles of us."

A twig snapped suddenly at the edge of the clearing. The lieutenant looked up quickly, his lean face tense.

His hand started for the revolver at his belt, but a harsh voice suddenly said, "Please, do not move."

The brush parted and two uniformed figures moved into the clearing. Each

held a German Luger in his right hand, and the muzzles of the guns were pointed unwaveringly at the three Americans.

CHAPTER VI

"GERMANS!" Jing whispered tensely in Tink's ear.

Tink took her hand in his and held it tightly.

The Germans stopped a dozen feet from the Americans. Their breeches and leather jackets were stained and torn, and their eyes were red-rimmed with fatigue. But the hands that held the guns were steady as rocks. They both wore wings over the sharp peaks of their garrison caps.

"Permit me," one of them spoke, his voice harsh and mocking. "Captain Myers, of the Luftwaffe, at your service." He gestured negligently to the man who stood beside him. "Oberleutnant Schmidt, my navigator. You are Americans?"

Lieutenant Diggles stood up slowly.

"Yes, we are Americans," he said. "We crashed here a week ago. My cameraman's leg was broken."

"What a coincidence," the German captain said. "We too crashed, but many miles from here. We are on our way to the coast. This territory is temporarily in British hands and isn't too healthy for our Nordic blood."

He glanced at the plane and then back to Lieutenant Diggles.

"Can your ship be repaired?"

He intercepted the warning glance the lieutenant flashed at Ann, and smiled.

"I see," he said. He looked at the gray service truck that was parked on the opposite side of the clearing. "Your ship can be repaired. I gather the young lady came here in the truck from some nearby allied field with the necessary equipment. How convenient."

"What do you mean?" Lieutenant Diggles said.

"We will need your plane to make our escape," the captain said. "Frankly our chances of working our way through this territory to the coast are not good. But we can fly to one of your bases from here in the matter of an hour or so. Tomorrow we will repair your plane. And now we will eat."

Ann angrily dropped the large tin food receptacle at their feet.

"There," she said, "with all my love. "You'd take it anyway."

"Quite right, my dear," the captain murmured. "We Germans discovered long ago that only fools and weaklings ever ask for anything."

He looked steadily at Ann until a slow angry flush colored the girl's cheeks.

"How lovely you are, my dear," the captain said, bowing slightly. "This may be the start of a beautiful friendship." His voice suddenly hardened again as he swung on Lieutenant Diggles. "We need sleep. My comrade, Oberleutnant Schmidt, will watch while I rest, and I will watch while he rests. If you have any foolish ideas of resisting, get rid of them before they cause you trouble. I warn you, if you make a move we will shoot the girl first."

He sat down on the ground beside the container and opened it greedily.

"While we are eating," he said, smiling gently, "I think you had better gather some moss and make me a nice comfortable bed." He gestured impatiently with his gun as the American lieutenant hesitated, his face hardening angrily.

"You had better do as I say," the captain murmured, "or I might find it necessary to put a bullet through one of your arms. That wouldn't be pleasant. Quickly!"

He chuckled contentedly and dug into the food container as the American lieutenant began to gather armfuls of moss and spread them on the ground.

THE next morning, under the armed supervision of the German officers, the job of repairing the plane was begun. The American lieutenant had prepared an inventory of the damage and the type and number of replacement parts that would be needed.

Captain Myers studied the list for a while and then ordered the lieutenant to get busy.

"And remember," he added. "I am completely familiar with these machines, so don't make any foolish attempt to sabotage the plane. And I also know how long each job should take, so I will not tolerate any stalling. Now get busy! We intend to take-off before dark tonight. Oberleutnant Schmidt will help you and also see to it that you don't do anything foolish."

All through the heat of the day Lieutenant Diggles worked on the plane, replacing damaged parts, inspecting every instrument; and the oberleutnant dogged his heels, watching his every move with small, suspicious eyes.

Finally the lieutenant straightened up from the undercarriage where he had tightened several loose bolts, and wiped his streaming face with a grease rag.

"That does it," he said, and he couldn't keep the bitterness from his voice.

Captain Myers was lying in the shade watching the American work.

"Excellent," he said heartily. "Are you sure that everything is in good shape?"

"Perfectly sure," Tom Diggles snapped.

The captain nodded contentedly.

"Now, if you'll be so kind as to clear away the brush from the clearing and swing the plane about, we won't impose on your hospitality any longer. One other thing," he added, with a soft little smile, "if the plane isn't in excellent working order it will be most unfortunate for the young lady."

"What do you mean?" Tom demanded.

The German captain flicked a speck of dust from his breeches before replying.

"Because," he murmured, "she is coming with us." He smiled. "She looks as if she might be amusing under different circumstances. So you see it would be a great pity if the plane wasn't in excellent condition. Because if it crashes, she will crash also. Are you sure now that there isn't something you've overlooked? Some little detail which just escaped your mind?"

"I said the plane was ready to go," the young American lieutenant told him frostily, "and I meant it."

"I'm quite sure you did," Captain Myers smiled, "but still the best of us are sometimes forgetful."

"What about my cameraman?" Tom asked. "That leg of his needs medical attention badly. Will you take him along too?"

The captain shook his head.

"I'm not interested in his condition," he said.

"I didn't think you would be," Tom said grimly. "You may get away with this Captain," he said, and his voice was as hard and cold as ice, "but if we ever meet again I think you'll regret what you are doing."

"I admire your sense of the dramatic," Captain Myers smiled, "but it is extremely unlikely that we will ever meet again. For when we take-off from this place you will be bound securely to one of these trees. It's only a logical precaution; you must see that. But

after we leave there won't be anyone left to set you free, so you will undoubtedly have a nice long wait before anyone happens along this way. The chances are that some hungry animal with no discrimination will find you a satisfying meal. But it will have to be very hungry before it will eat an American."

He leaned back, smiling at his joke.

"Now get busy, my young friend, before I decide to shoot you immediately. Your usefulness to me is over, but I enjoy seeing you clear away rubble, and slave like a stupid mule under my orders. That is quite satisfying to me, but I will forego that satisfaction and kill you quickly if you don't get busy."

IN AN hour's time the American lieutenant had cleared a section of the ground and, with Oberleutnant Schmidt's help, had swung the plane about to face it.

Captain Myers got to his feet then and walked across to the lean-to where Ann was changing the dressing on Red's broken leg.

"You will not have time to finish that errand of mercy," he said ironically.

"I understand you are taking me with you," Ann said evenly.

"That is correct," the captain said. He smiled and bowed politely. "Don't look so cold, my dear. In Nazi Germany there can be a great future for a young woman who is both intelligent and beautiful."

"Listen, you Nazi rat," Red yelled, "if you lay a hand on her I'll tear your head from your shoulders."

The captain clapped his hands together in mock applause.

"Bravo!" he cried. "Spoken like a true American. Full of fury and indignation and stupidity." He gestured sharply to the oberleutnant.

"We must be leaving," he said. "See that these two are bound securely."

The oberleutnant worked with methodical speed and thoroughness. He removed the American's belts, forced them to sit with their backs to thick trees and bound their arms behind them, with swift sure loops of the stout leather.

Red twisted in pain and beads of sweat broke on his forehead. But not a sound passed his tightly locked lips.

Ann watched the scene with hot, dry eyes. Her cheeks were flaming with an anger that was too deep for tears.

"You beasts!" she cried. "You inhuman beasts! You can't leave these men here to die."

"That is where you are wrong," Captain Myers smiled. "You don't appreciate our philosophy yet. It isn't that I enjoy doing this, but it is necessary, therefore it must be done. When you have spent some time with me you will better understand our methods and principles."

"You have none," Ann cried, in helpless fury. "You're like jungle beasts masquerading in human form. There isn't a decent emotion in your body."

"Perhaps you're right," the captain said blandly. "But our method is successful and that is what counts."

"But how long will it be successful?" the American lieutenant asked quietly, but there was a bitter anger in his voice. "For every one of us you kill there are a thousand to step forward to take our places. And even the Nazis can't kill enough to silence every man who is joining the fight against them."

"I am not interested in these idle discussions," the captain said. He nodded to the oberleutnant. "You may put the girl aboard now. And it might be a wise idea to bind her also. She is a bit too temperamental to be left loose. She might do something foolish. We

must save her from herself."

The oberleutnant pinioned the girl's arms behind her before she could make a move, and with his own belt, strapped her elbows tightly to her sides.

He led her to the plane and helped her inside.

WHEN the girl had disappeared into the plane, Jing turned furiously on Tink.

"If you don't do something, Tink, I'll never speak to you again," she blazed.

"I'm trying," Tink said desperately. He scratched his head anxiously. "Let's go inside," he said.

They went aboard the plane. The German oberleutnant had shoved the girl into a chair and was standing at the controls, just in front of her.

"Couldn't we untie her?" Jing suggested

"How?" Tink said miserably. "We can't reach the straps on her elbows. They're too high."

The German officer was bent over the controls and Jing looked at him with a sudden speculative gleam in her eyes. She glanced at the small, stout boots that Ann was wearing and then looked up again at the stooped form of the German. And as she made a mental measurement, an odd smile curved her lips.

"Tink," she said, "I think I've got it."

"Got what?"

"A way to untie the girl."

"How?" Tink asked excitedly.

"Watch."

She crept under the chair until she reached the booted feet of the girl. With an inch-long piece of straw in her hand, she raised herself on tip-toe and moved aside the cuff of the girl's trousers.

Tink watched her in open, undisguised bewilderment.

"What's the idea?" he asked.

Jing didn't bother to answer. With a prayerful, beeseeching expression on her face, she jabbed the tiny piece of sharp straw against the girl's bare ankle.

"Ouch!" Ann cried.

Instinctively her foot lashed out and, without deliberate intent on her part, the stout toe of her shoe collided with the most prominently exposed section of the German officer's anatomy. She hadn't kicked him purposely. The movement of her foot had been simply a reflexive reaction against a sharp little scratch on her ankle.

Oberleutnant Schmidt straightened with an indignant cry and with both hands clasped the injured section of his body. He swung about and glared angrily at Ann.

"So?" he cried. "You are up to *schweinhund* American tricks already!"

"I didn't mean to kick you," Ann said. "I'm not sorry, of course, but it was quite accidental. And I wish more accidents would turn out so satisfyingly," she added scathingly.

"We will make sure that no more 'accidents' like that happen," the German snapped.

He grabbed a piece of wire and bound her ankles together. Then he lifted her from the chair and dumped her to the floor.

"Now there will be no more smart tricks," he cried.

"I can still bite," Ann said grimly, from the floor, "and all I want is a chance."

THE oberleutant laughed and turned back to the controls, and Ann twisted herself on one side and stared helplessly at the wall of the cabin. And in that position the straps

that secured her elbows were touching the floor.

Tink patted Jing solemnly on the shoulder.

"You," he said, "are a genius."

"Oh, hurry," Jing cried. "You can untie her now, can't you?"

"Sure thing," Tink said.

He was tugging at the prong of the buckle when Captain Myers climbed aboard and said. "We are ready to leave, Schmidt?"

"Right away," the oberleutant said. He turned the ignition switch and the smooth, powerful roar of the twin motors was soon reverberating in the cabin.

The captain smiled down at Ann and nudged her with the toe of his boot.

"And how is our spirited and beautiful prisoner?" he asked genially.

"Hurry, Tink!" Jing said pleadingly.

"I'm trying," he said, through set teeth. But the prong of the buckle was under pressure and he couldn't budge it.

"Not very talkative, eh?" Captain Myers murmured. "Well, you'll change that attitude soon enough."

He turned his back to Ann and nodded to his junior officer.

"Whenever you're ready," he said, "you may take-off. I will take the controls when we get in the air."

The oberleutnant released the brake and the plane started forward slowly. And at that same instant Tink put all his strength into one last effort and the prong slipped from its hole in the leather and the straps hung loosely on the girl's arms.

Ann felt the pressure of the straps release and she moved her arms incredulously. She was free! In some miraculous fashion the buckle must have slipped.

She raised herself cautiously to a sitting position. There was no time to remove the wire from ankles; the captain was standing directly in front of her and the gun at his hip was within reach of her hand.

She reached for it, and with one quick motion, jerked it from the holster. The captain spun around, his hand snapping frantically to his hip, but he was too late. He found himself staring into the muzzle of his own gun, held unwaveringly in the hand of a girl who looked as if she would relish shooting the eyes out of his head.

"Tell him to stop the plane!" Ann snapped, and there was no mistaking the grim gesture she made with the gun. She was ready to fire—immediately!

"Schmidt! Stop!" Captain Myers said frantically.

The oberleutnant looked over his shoulder and his eyes widened with sudden incredulous horror as he saw the gun pointing at his head.

He stopped the plane and swung around in the pilot's seat.

"Don't shoot!" he said, his lips trembling so that he could hardly get the words out.

"Open the door and get out," Ann said grimly. "And I wouldn't advise you to make a run for it."

THE oberleutnant stood up and moved slowly toward the door, but when he passed behind the captain, he suddenly ducked low, slipped to one side and dove for the girl.

She shot him in the right shoulder without changing expression. He fell at her feet, moaning softly.

"I didn't like doing that," Ann said quietly to the captain, "but I borrowed a little of your philosophy for the moment. They fight fire with fire in America, and we can learn to fight you with your own tactics if that's the only way

we can exterminate Naziism."

The captain licked his lips and said nothing.

"Now back up," the girl said.

When the captain backed away, the girl unwrapped the wire from her ankles with one hand and then stood up, still covering the German with his gun.

"Open the door and step out," she ordered.

Tink and Jing hugged each other as the captain climbed out of the plane with the girl close behind him, pointing the gun squarely at his head.

Red and the young lieutenant watched the two emerge from the plane with incredulous expressions on their faces.

"I don't believe it," Tom Diggles said feebly. "It's a mirage."

"You're still underestimating the air corps maintenance," Ann said. "We're pretty substantial."

Red yelled happily, "That ain't the half of it. Where's the other krauthead?"

"In the plane," Ann said, as she came to a stop before them. "He's not feeling awfully good right now." She jabbed the gun into the captain's back. "Get down on your knees and untie those two men," she said.

When the lieutenant climbed to his feet he grinned at the girl.

"Will you pardon me a minute, I've got a little job to handle?"

"What, Tom?"

"This," Tom said grimly.

He swung the German captain around and said, "I told you we might meet again, and I told you you'd regret it." He stripped off his leather jacket and walked slowly toward the German, his hands swinging loosely at his sides.

"Prepare to get awfully regretful," he murmured.

"Oh boy," Red said happily, "this is all I need to make my day complete. A ring side seat to watch a can of sauerkraut get punched full of holes."

The captain backed slightly away, his eyes narrowed in his face. He was heavier through the shoulders than the American and he was fully twenty pounds heavier. There was a fleeting expression of triumph on his face as he raised his fists.

"This may be interesting," he said.

CHAPTER VII

TINK and Jing settled down contentedly to watch the fight, but after a few minutes their faces were set in worried frowns.

The German, using his greater weight, was driving the American relentlessly back, driving sledge-hammer blows into his face and body with every step.

The lieutenant fought savagely, standing toe-to-toe and slugging furiously, but he was forced back steadily under the powerful punches of the German.

"Box him!" Red screamed. "Box him, you fool!"

He almost climbed to his feet in his excitement.

"Jab him, use your left. Who d' you think you are—Joe Louis?"

The American fought back grimly, desperately, but the terrific punches of the German were sapping his strength. His face was bleeding and his breath was coming in deep, laboring gasps.

The German circled slightly and drove in again, driving the American toward Ann. There was a desperate cunning gleam in the depths of his eyes and his face was a hard mask of hatred.

When he maneuvered the American within a half dozen feet of the girl, he planted himself solidly and snapped across a hard, driving right that sent the lieutenant sprawling to the ground.

Ann swung to watch the lieutenant, a

pleading expression in her eyes and, for that second, the German was out of range of the gun in her hand. And that had been his plan.

With a savage cry he lunged for her, his hand grasping for the gun.

Red yelled a frantic warning and the girl spun back, but it was too late. The German was upon her, one powerful arm closing about her waist and drawing her to him, while the other hand grabbed for the gun.

She struggled helplessly in his iron grip.

"Get rid of the gun!" Red yelled.

The German's hand was inches from her wrist, and there was a gloating expression of triumph on his face as he drew her closer. Ann jerked away from him with every ounce of her strength behind the effort, and hurled the gun into the tangled brush that surrounded the clearing.

With a wild curse the German flung her aside. He glared at the lieutenant who was crawling back to his feet.

"It's an even fight now," he snarled. "There's no gun in my back this time. And when I beat the rest of your brains out, I put a bullet through the cripple's head and take the girl with me just as I planned. You haven't won, my stupid friend, you have only delayed the inevitable."

The American glanced dazedly at Ann's huddled, limp figure on the ground, sprawled where the German's powerful shove had thrown her, and gradually the fog faded from his eyes and they hardened to points of cold anger.

"Okay, krauthead," he murmured, "that was only the first round."

"Attaboy!" yelled Red.

THE German smiled tightly and moved in, but this time the American circled him, jabbing a fast, blinding left into the face. The German shook his head angrily and threw a half dozen wild punches into the air, but still the left was in his face, stinging, blinding, tipping him off balance before he could set himself to punch.

A flush of rage crept into his cheeks and he lunged forward swinging wildly with his right. The lieutenant let it whistle harmlessly over his head, and then he stepped in and slammed three hard punches into the German's body.

The German gasped and dropped his hand to cover his stomach. And Tom Diggles set himself and slugged him with a right on his unprotected jaw.

The German's eyes glazed and he staggered back, trying to lift his arms to protect his face. The lieutenant drove in, both fists flying, and the German fell back another step. A hard right toppled him off balance and his knees began to buckle slowly. As he fell Tom swung his right arm in a vicious chopping stroke that smacked against the side of the captain's jaw with a sound like a brick falling on a pavement.

The German hit the ground, rolled once and was still.

For an instant the American, swaying slightly on his feet, stared at the limp figure of the captain, then he shook his head and moved to the girl's side.

She was sitting on the ground, smiling.

"Are you okay, honey?" he asked anxiously.

"What I just saw," she said, "would cure me of anything. You were wonderful."

The lieutenant grinned slowly.

"It was kind of fun, too," he said.

CHAPTER VIII

THE motors of the plane were throbbing powerfully and the young

American was at the controls making a last-minute check of his instruments.

Ann was at his side, watching him anxiously.

"Everything okay?" she asked.

"Our only problem is gas," he answered. He glanced back at the two Germans, one bound carefully with leather belts and the other stretched out unconscious, and then his eyes moved to Red, who was propped up in the center of the cabin.

He glanced back at his gas gauge and shook his head.

"We've got quite a load," he said, "All we can do is a lot of hoping."

Tink and Jing were sitting at the edge of the doorway, taking a last look at the green depths of the jungle.

"Isn't it wonderful how nicely everything turned out," Jing said, sighing happily. "I just can't believe all our troubles are actually over."

"I can't either," Tink said nervously, glancing over his shoulder.

"You mean you're worried about Nastee?"

Tink nodded. "I wonder where he is," he said.

"Who wants to know?" a familiar and impudent voice said behind him.

Tink swung around and saw Nastee standing behind him, a contented smirk on his face. His hands were in his pockets and he was rocking impudently back and forth on his heels.

"Oh, oh," Tink said.

And then he saw that Nastee was not alone. At his side was a wizened, sullen looking little imp with bulging eyes and a small bitter mouth.

Jing was tugging at Tink's arm.

"Who's that?" she whispered.

"A gremlin," Tink said grimly.

"You bet he's a gremlin," Nastee said, chuckling happily. "He got here just a while ago and he showed me a lot of clever little tricks."

"Do you mean that you two have sabotaged this plane again?" Tink said angrily.

Nastee laughed gleefully. "Just wait'll we get in the air and you'll see."

"Now, just a minute you two," Tink said, getting to his feet and staring from one to the other with determined eyes. "I've stood all I intend to of your interference and orneryness. And I'm sick and tired of your stupidity."

"Stupidity?" the gremlin queried, his eyes sharp and bright. "How do you figure that?"

"I'll tell you," Tink said disgustedly. "We exist because people believe in us. If everyone stopped believing in us we'd stop existing. Even a gremlin should be able to figure that out. And yet you're working for the Germans. And do you think they'll believe in us. They don't believe in love or honor or decency, so what makes you think they'll believe in fairies."

The gremlin scratched his head.

"You got a good point there," he said, at last.

"Now, you're going to tell the rest of the gremlins what I've told you," Tink said, "and if they don't think it makes sense, tell them I'm going to be on their necks until they do."

He swung the gremlin around in the front of the door and kicked him out of the plane.

"Don't forget," he shouted after the gremlin, "you've had your last warning."

The gremlin sat on the grass and looked up at Tink with respect in his eyes.

"Okay, chum," he said, 'I'll talk to 'em."

ANN walked to the door and closed it.

"All set, Tom," she said.

"Okay." He released the brake and the plane slowly gathered speed as it rolled slowly down the make-shift runway. With a slight tremble it left the ground, lagged for an instant and then began a slow, steady climb that took it over the tops of the surrounding trees with several feet to spare.

"Now," the lieutenant said, relaxing in the pilot's seat, "we have nothing to worry about as long as the gas holds out."

Tink turned to Nastee.

"What did you do to this plane?"

Nastee laughed. "You can shove gremlins around, but I'm different."

"Then you aren't going to tell me?"

"Why should I?" Nastee said scornfully, "if you're so smart, why don't you find out for yourself."

Tink started for him but Jing grabbed his arm and Nastee took advantage of the opportunity to scurry away.

"Why did you do that?" Tink demanded.

"I've got a little idea," Jing said with a smile. "I'm going after Nastee now and you follow me in a little while."

"All right," Tink grumbled, "but you should of let me beat it out of him."

"Just like a man," said Jing with calm superiority. "Only one approach to every problem, brute force."

"Hurry up," Tink said. "Don't stand here making wise-cracks."

Jing hurried away, and after a few minutes search she found Nastee up in the nose of the plane, sulking.

"Nastee," she said, "I think you're just terrible."

Nastee grinned at her. "You aren't fooling me. Tink sent you to get me to tell you what I did to the plane."

"Oh no he didn't," Jing said. "I wasn't even thinking of that. I was talking about the terrible way you fool everybody."

"Fool everybody?" Nastee said blankly. "What do you mean?"

"Just what I said," Jing said firmly. "You're so anxious to impress everyone with how bad you are, that you even lie about it. You know you do. And actually you're just quiet and nice and afraid to do anything wrong. But it's lying about it and making people think you're bad when you're really not, that's terrible."

"But I am really bad," Nastee protested. 'I don't lie about that."

"Oh yes you do," Jing said. "You lied when you said you'd done something to the plane. And I know you didn't."

"How do you know?" Nastee challenged.

"Because I just heard the pilot talking," Jing said, "and he said everything is working perfectly."

Nastee grinned slyly. "He doesn't know yet, that's all. Just wait a while."

"Now you're just lying again," Jing said.

Nastee looked at her in quick irritation.

"Oh, is that so," he snapped. "Well, just you look here."

HE BENT down and pulled aside a metal disc under which ran one of the main gas lines. There was a slow, steady leak from the pipe. Gas had collected at the base of the small steel chamber in a three inch puddle and it was rising steadily.

"You see," Nastee chuckled, "We punctured the gas line."

Jing looked helplessly at the steady trickle of gas that was dripping from the pipe into the small chamber. Nastee was on his knees peering gleefully at the slowly rising pool of gas and, suddenly, Jing stood up, and from sheer helpless irritation raised her foot and kicked Nastee squarely in the rear.

He squawked loudly and fell forward into the small, gas-filled chamber. She saw his legs threshing about wildly, and then he got himself straightened out and stood up sputtering indignantly.

"What's the big idea?" he squeaked wrathfully.

The gas was at his neck and rising steadily. He looked at her and suddenly the belligerence left his face. He swallowed nervously.

"What are you going to do? he asked weakly.

"I don't know," Jing said.

Tink suddenly appeared at her side. He patted her back again solemnly. He peered down at Nastee and chuckled as the drenched little leprechaun shook an angry fist at him.

"Get me out of here," Nastee shrieked. "This gas will be over my head soon."

"Not if you're smart," Tink said.

"What do you mean?" Nastee cried.

"Well," Tink said, "you can reach the leak, can't you?"

Nastee stood on tip-toes and reached up until his hand closed over the small puncture in the gas pipe.

"Why, yes," he said, "I can."

The gas had reached his chin, but it stopped rising as the trickle from the pipe stopped.

"Well you've got nothing to worry about," Tink grinned. "As long as you hold the leak, you won't drown.

"But I'm soaking wet," Nastee cried. He stared at Tink and Jing grinning down at him over the edge of the chamber, and his little face suddenly flushed with anger.

"It was all a trick," he shouted. "You did this just to save the gas. Well I won't do it. I'll drown first."

"I don't think so," Tink grinned.

He waved cheerfully at Nastee and then closed the cover of the metal chamber.

He put his arm around Jing's waist and smiled at her.

"I don't know what I'd do without you," he said.

And in the cabin of the plane the young lieutenant duplicated the gesture but he added a little something to it that the leprechauns haven't gotten around to imitating yet.

He kissed her soundly.

THE END



(Continued from page 6)

production. However, to you readers the effect will be scarcely less than previously, if you procure both magazines, each of which will provide 100,000 words of the finest science fiction and fantasy we've ever seen. The war is certainly producing a crop of fine yarns along brand new imaginative trends.

AND as an adjunct to these two magazines, we might point out that *Mammoth Detective*, carrying 130,000 words of brilliant detective fiction appears every three months on your newsstand with stories by the same brilliant authors you like so well in *Fantastic Adventures*. For instance, in this new issue on sale August 16, you will find your favorite, Robert Bloch with a mystery that is as different as any of his fantasy. You will also find William Brengle among those present with "Tavern In The Town" a clever little yarn about a brand new kind of detective. A special treat is a short novel by David Wright O'Brien (incidentally the last story he wrote before joining the army air force), and Leroy Yerxa with one of his clever O'Sheen short stories. Add a complete book-length novel "With This Gun" by John Wiley and Willis March, and you've got a large two-bits worth of entertainment!

BERKELEY LIVINGSTON, one of our newest writers who made a recent hit with a story about Gabriel and his trumpet, has joined the armed forces. We still have several of his stories on hand, but not enough! Those we have will prove that to you when you read 'em!

THE November issue of our companion magazine, *Amazing Stories* will carry a contest in which $1,000.00 will be paid for 1,000 words!

Yes, you heard right! All that is required is to write a story of 1,000 words or less around an illustration carried in that issue. Anyone can enter. Why not watch for that issue and take a gander at the illustration? Maybe you'll see the story behind the picture and make yourself a neat sum of money. By the way, payment of the prize will be in a war bond of the $1,000.00 denomination. If the winner happens to be in the armed forces (male or female) the prize will be doubled! Two thousand-dollar war bonds! This issue of *Amazing Stories* will be on the stands September 10.

OLD-TIMER Jack Williamson, who is now in the army as a weather man, called us up the other day while passing through town. He is waiting, like all of us, for the end of the war so that he can get back to his typewriter and do more of those grand fantasy tales that made him a legend during the years from 1927 to 1942.

HERE'S a fantastic little experiment that has been taking place in the world of science: Dr. J. W. Beal, a former professor of botany at Michigan State College, buried twenty pint bottles, each containing one thousand assorted weed seeds mixed in sand. This was done sixty years ago. The idea was to dig up one bottle every five years and find out how many seeds were still viable and what species they represented.

The five-year schedule was kept up until twenty years ago, when it was decided to make the experiment last longer by digging up the bottles at ten year intervals. Prof. H. T. Darlington, of the college, has been carrying on the project since 1915.

Of the twenty species originally put away only four germinated in this latest test. Even these four do not represent a perfectly smooth score, for it was believed that the mullein seeds originally put into the bottles were all of the common wooly species. But the smooth mullein is what came up this time, and also ten years ago, though it had not appeared in any of the earlier plantings.

Black mustard and water smartweed, two species that survived up to the fiftieth year failed to germinate this time. Species that lasted forty years, but were missing at the half-century mark included pigweed, ragweed, peppercress, plantain, and purslane.

Plants that made the sixty year survival mark are curly dock, evening primrose, smooth mullein, and night-flowering catchfly.

Eleven bottles are still buried in the soil of the State College Campus.

ANTHROPOLOGISTS tell us how various customs differ with the world's peoples. Burial customs, too, vary throughout the world.

Burial customs among the Eskimos differ widely and have been influenced in recent years by the white man.

Many of the Asiastic Eskimos burn their dead.

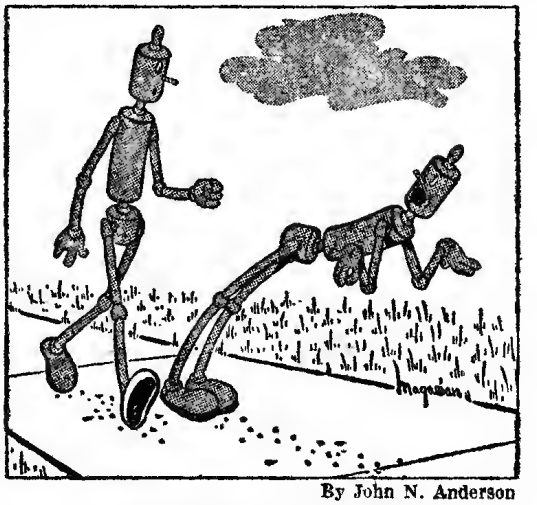
The Greenland Eskimos throw their dead into the sea.

The Eskimos in Alaska and the Bering Strait region, who have been influenced by the Indians of the Northwest coast, dispose of their dead in boxes which are placed on posts or rude platforms. The body is covered with a crude driftwood house or a small tent. It is placed there in a contracted position with the knees drawn up to the chest.

Those Eskimos inhabiting the region from the MacKenzie to Hudson Bay formerly placed the body in a contracted position in a small tomb of stone or snow. At the present time, these Eskimos secure, if possible a box in which to bury their dead, but wood is so scarce that they are seldom successful. Generally, the body is clothed or wrapped in skins and then covered lightly with snow or stones. No heed is paid to the opening of graves and the devouring of bodies by dogs and wolves, says the United States Bureau of American Ethnology. And no effort is made to collect and rebury the bones.

Hunting implements and other utensils are placed in the grave with men. Pots, lamps, knives, and other objects of their daily life are placed with women. A child's toys are buried with it. These are Eskimos' mortuary offerings.

WHICH brings us to the close of another Notebook. Across the ocean, as we write this, still another notebook is being filled with notations which will become tomorrow's history book. The Allies are attacking, and the final showdown is on the way. To us, who have read stories of the future so often in this magazine, the end means the coming true of all these imaginative dreams. Every day we are getting glimpses of fantastic miracles being created. Tomorrow they'll be part of our daily life! *Rap.*



By John N. Anderson

"You know, I think my gyroscope is acting up again!"



Madly Mr. Fooze tore after his fleeing underwear



MYSTERY OF THE CREEPING UNDERWEAR

By TARLETON FISKE

It was the most potent formula Mr. Fooze had ever mixed—the elixir of life itself!

LITTLE Mr. Fooze walked up the front steps to the door of his neat suburban bungalow. His jaw was squared with determination.

Tonight he was going to have it out with Professor Beaker once and for all.

"Things," brooded Mr. Fooze, darkly, "have gone far enough. Dora shouldn't have taken him as a boarder anyway. I admit we could use the money and the spare room was going to waste. But why did she rent it to a crazy chemistry professor?"

Sidney Fooze halted before the door and hesitated before announcing his arrival. He needed to work his courage up a little more. He paced back and forth, remembering the insults and injuries caused by their boarder.

"The first thing he did was to move in all those chemicals of his," muttered Mr. Fooze. "Then he began to make those foolish 'experiments.' Wouldn't tell what he was doing or why. Nothing leaked out about them except the smell."

Mr. Fooze wrinkled his nose reminiscently.

The smell had been terrible. Mr. Fooze and Dora would wake up in the middle of the night and sniff at what was coming down on the air from the attic where Professor Beaker lived and worked.

That was bad enough. And then Professor Beaker had set fire to his room one Sunday morning.

Mr. Fooze had wanted to throw him out then, but he paid so promptly and pleaded the urgent necessity of his "great experiment" and Mr. Fooze had let him stay.

Last week there had been a flood.

Three days ago he had brought ten live chickens into the attic and turned the place into a shambles of feathers.

Mr. Fooze was sick and tired of his star boarder and his antics. No matter what he was "experimenting" on—perpetual motion or a rocket to the moon —Professor Beaker must go. If he wouldn't tell what he was doing or let anyone into his room, that was tough. He'd better hire himself a padded cell and continued his chemical research there.

"And another thing, Professor!" growled Mr. Fooze, raising his voice and sneering at the imaginary figure cowering in his brain. "You can kindly take your whole apparatus and—"

"Sidney!"

Mr. Fooze jerked out of his twilight day-dream suddenly. Dora, his wife, stood on the doorstep.

"Hello, dear," he said, meekly.

"What in the world are you talking to yourself for?" she asked.

"I was just rehearsing," Mr. Fooze explained. "I'm going to tell the Professor off tonight."

"No, Sidney."

"What do you mean—no?"

"You won't be able to, I'm afraid."

"Why not?"

"Well—you see, he left here rather suddenly today."

"Left here suddenly? How?"

"Through the roof," Dora told him.

"No!"

"Yes. Poor Professor Beaker," sighed Dora. "He was always afraid he'd go to pieces over his work."

"You mean he blew himself up?"

"That's the direction he was going," Dora agreed.

"Then what about our roof?"

"The insurance men are going to put on a new one," said Mrs. Fooze. "The police were here, of course."

"Did you send for an undertaker?"

"There isn't any need to," said Dora, simply. "So far all they've found is part of his upper plate. It landed on the school-house roof three blocks away."

She kissed Mr. Fooze on the nose. "But let's not stand here gabbing," she said. "Supper's getting cold."

MR. FOOZE shook his head. After three years of married life, he still couldn't figure it out. The boarder blew himself to bits and took the roof off, and all Dora could do was worry about supper getting cold.

He sighed and went in to dinner.

After supper he explored the attic room.

Sure enough, the roof was gone—a big chunk of it, anyway. Twisted debris was all that remained of a bunsen-burner unit and laboratory table. The Professor's room itself was a shambles. Mr. Fooze waded ankle-deep in broken glass from beakers, retorts and bottles. Walls were stained weird hues from the splashing of exploded and spilled chemicals. The Professor's notes and laboratory papers were a soggy mass buried under the broken glass and powdered crystals.

"The men are coming tomorrow to fix the roof," said Dora. "I'll have them

clean up this room, too."

"Good idea," said Mr. Fooze.

"You should have heard the explosion," Dora told him. "It made so much noise I could hardly hear my serial program."

"Quite likely."

"I wonder what he was doing up here?" Dora asked. "I often meant to ask him. But there was always so much to do during the day I never had a chance."

"You mean so many radio serials to listen to," said her husband, sarcastically.

"That's right," Dora answered. "Ooh, hurry downstairs, dear! There's a program on tonight I *can't* miss!"

She scurried down the steps and Mr. Fooze followed, shrugging helplessly.

Dora sat in the parlor fiddling with the radio, and Mr. Fooze stared at the tiger-skin rug on the floor. The tiger head winked up at him and Mr. Fooze winked back. Women were funny.

Gradually he dozed off and forgot about it.

He was walking in his sleep when he went up to bed that night. He turned in without any consciousness of what he was doing.

He was still s n o r i n g when Dora jerked him violently by the shoulder.

"Whzzmattr?" he inquired, digging his face into the pillow.

"Wake up, Sidney! It's five o'clock!"

"What of it?" grunted Mr. Fooze.

"You've got to be at the office at eleven," Dora reminded.

"Buzz' only five," groaned her husband.

"But you'll have to get up and do the washing first," said Dora.

"Washing?"

"With all that excitement yesterday, I forgot to wash," Dora explained. "And you'll need fresh clothes when you go to that big meeting today."

Mr. Fooze groaned and crawled out of bed. Once in his innocent honeymoon days he had volunteered to "help around the house." He had been so gallant.

Now he was just plain stuck. He crept into his oldest shirt and trousers.

"As long as you're up," Dora suggested, "you might as well go into the attic and pick up some of that broken glass. Carry it down to the basement when you take the wash."

MR. FOOZE shivered his way up to the attic and Professor Beaker's ruined room. He dumped a lot of glassware into the laundry basket on top of the clothes and carried the whole mess down to the basement.

He stacked bottles and vials on the floor and then began to do things with the laundry.

Cursing sweetly, he dumped underwear, shorts, panties, shirts, socks, gloves, neckties, dresses several pairs of wash pants into the washing machine.

The machine began to clank and grind. So did Mr. Fooze who was singing *"Rinso white,"* in a hideous falseto.

After a while Mr. Fooze got pretty sick and tired of the whole business—but mostly tired. He lay down on the basement floor and went back to sleep.

"Sidney!"

His wife called from the head of the stairs.

"Yes, dear?"

"Did you remember to put in the blueing?"

"Oh, sure," lied Mr. Fooze, who had done no such thing.

He got up, rubbing his eyes, and searched the basement shelves for the bottle of blueing.

Yawning, he spied the little blue bottle on the floor, twisted the cap, and poured in a generous measure.

Then he lay down on the coal pile.

"Sidney!"

He sprang to attention. "Yes, sugar?"

"I forgot to tell you—the blueing is upstairs in the kitchen," Dora called down.

"Oh, oh!" grunted Mr. Fooze, under his breath. He glanced in the washing machine. He hoped he hadn't made a mistake and put some ink into it. Stooping, he examined the blueing bottle.

No label. And the stuff smelled funny. But it was blue. And the clothes didn't look spoiled.

He hoped for the best as he carried his basket of wet wash out to the yard. The clothes-line flapped in a strong breeze. Good. The garments should dry in an hour or so with this wind.

Mr. Fooze hung clothes and then lay down in the back yard for his delayed nap.

This time he actually slept.

It seemed to Mr. Fooze that he had a horried dream. A most real and ghastly dream.

It seemed as though Mr. Fooze woke up two hours later. The first thing he noticed was that the breeze had died down—died down completely.

Then he glanced at the clothes-line and gasped.

There was no wind, but the clothes were moving!

Shirts and shorts danced up and down the line, instead of dangling decently. For a moment, Mr. Fooze had the confused impression that the laundry was—somehow—*alive*.

He walked over and felt the edge of a chemise. It was perfectly dry. Good! He could take this stuff down, iron it, and leave for the office.

HUMMING under his breath, Mr. Fooze began to unpin the wash and drop garments into the basket.

That's when he realized he must be dreaming.

Mr. Fooze reached up and unfastened a long union suit. As he did so, the garment seemed to slip from his fingers.

It did not fall to the ground.

Instead, the union suit *stood* beside him in the yard!

Stood there on woolen legs, arms resting jauntily on the hips!

Mr. Fooze stared with jaw agape, as the union suit suddenly turned its back on him, disclosing a gaping open flap in the rear.

He reached out to grasp the unnatural object, but the union suit swiftly moved away.

Mr. Fooze lost his temper and lunged.

Immediately, the union suit started to run! Wobbling grotesquely, it scampered across the back yard, with Mr. Fooze hot on its ankles—for a union suit has no heels.

"Come back here!" yelled Mr. Fooze, scarcely realizing what he was shouting. He glanced around wildly. What if neighbors should see?

The union suit played tag around the clothes posts, its open flap fluttering coyly.

Mr. Fooze went slightly berserk, then. He jerked down the end of the clothesline and coiled the rope purposefully.

The union suit danced just out of his range, like a headless ghost, taunting him and waving its wrinkled arms.

But Mr. Fooze was ready. He twirled his clothesline and it settled—like a lasso—over the bewitched garment.

Cursing furiously, Mr. Fooze dragged the union suit to his side, stooped down, and thrust it, still squirming, into the clothes basket.

Then, as he lifted the basket full of writhing garments, he suddenly stumbled and went down. The force of his fall knocked the wind out of him.

And it jarred his senses still more. For he realized, in a hideous moment, that he was not dreaming. He was wide awake. And his laundry *was* alive!

Arms and legs waved from the basket, as imprisoned clothing squirmed. Mr. Fooze held on tight and stared.

He didn't know what had happened, or why. But there was only one thing to do with clothes, alive or dead. That was—iron them. Iron them and lock them into drawers where they'd be out of sight.

Muttering under his breath, Mr. Fooze carried the laundry basket into the house, set it down on the kitchen table, and put up the ironing board.

He was grateful to see that Dora didn't enter the kitchen. She was listening to a program in the parlor.

While he waited for the iron to heat, Mr. Fooze tried to figure things out.

Obviously, something had happened to the laundry. But what?

Then Mr. Fooze remembered the blueing he had dumped into the wash—the blueing that was not really blueing.

It had come from a blue bottle, he remembered. A blue bottle on the basement floor. On the basement floor, where he had dumped the bottles he carried from Professor Beaker's room.

Could it have been a bottle of chemical from the Professor's experiments?

Perhaps.

But what kind of a concoction could bring clothes to life?

MR. FOOZE tried to think. He stared at the laundry basket in apprehensive horror. The thought of ironing these unusual garments dismayed him. What if they didn't like heat? What if the pants refused to be pressed?

There was only one worse alternative—and that was what Dora would say to him if she found this out. That must never happen. He had to iron the clothes and hide them.

Mr. Fooze approached the clothes basket. To his relief, he found the garments lying still. Nothing rustled or slithered or waved to and fro.

He touched the top garments gingerly. They did not move.

Perhaps the effects of the strange chemical had worn off. He hoped so. He began to iron at top speed. First some underwear, then a pair of socks. He'd need them to wear today to the office.

After that he pressed a green wash tie. That was also a part of his wardrobe.

Then Mr. Fooze got to work on the real job—ironing the brown slack suit he must wear at the office today. The boss had insisted he wear the horrible ensemble.

As he ironed, he glanced at his watch. Only an hour left!

There was no time to finish ironing the rest of the garments. Fluttering in haste, he hurriedly jammed the rest of the wash back into the basket, picked up the ironed garments, and lugged the load up to the bedroom.

To be on the safe side, he stuffed all the unpressed clothing in his wife's bureau drawers and locked them up.

Then he took a pair of green shorts, underwear, the green tie, socks, and his slack suit, and sat down on the bed.

He dressed swiftly—but without a hitch. The garments didn't try to run away. At last he stood before the mirror in slack suit and necktie. He looked perfectly normal in his attire. Stepping into a pair of sandals, he turned and made for the stairs.

Going downstairs, his trouble started.

He remembered the blue bottle in the cellar. Some inner instinct told him not to leave without looking at it again.

Mr. Fooze made for the cellar. Sure enough, there stood the unlabelled bottle, right where he had left it. The blue glass tingled against his palm as Mr. Fooze lifted it up and took out the cork. He sniffed at the liquid. It smelled faintly of ether. But there was nothing very unusual in that.

His eye lighted on the bar of soap on the wash tub. With trembling deliberation, Mr. Fooze tilted the bottle gently. A drop fell squarely on the soap.

Mr. Fooze saw the liquid fall. Then he grinned. Nothing happened. The soap still rested there.

Then—

The soap jumped.

Mr. Fooze saw it jump, and his mouth opened.

That was bad, for the soap sailed in the direction of Mr. Fooze's face, and landed squarely in his open mouth.

He groaned and spluttered as the soap suddenly bounded from between his teeth and began to hop around on the floor. Mr. Fooze made a dive for it, but it jumped into a rat-hole and disappeared.

He stood there, trying to control his trembling fingers.

It was true then. This blue bottle—Professor Beaker's bottle — contained some mysterious ingredient that had the power of animating objects. Making things come alive.

Mr. Fooze shuddered.

Something must be done, but there was not time to decide right now. He had to get to the office.

HE WENT up the stairs, carrying the blue bottle carefully in his hand. He'd better not drop it, or the steps might suddenly spring to life and start clattering all over the house!

Mr. Fooze headed straight for the parlor. While the tigerskin rug glared up at him accusingly, he put the blue bottle in the upper drawer of his desk and locked the desk.

Still shaking, he went back down the hall and slipped out of the house. Dora was listening to the radio, and he didn't disturb her. He was afraid to tell her.

All Mr. Fooze could do was hope and pray. Hope and pray that the newly-washed clothes he was wearing would behave. Perhaps the ironing had done the trick. He had always known that clothes make the man—and he was only afraid that they might make the man crazy. Well, it would all come out in the wash.

It took all of Mr. Fooze's powers of concentration to find his street car corner—because by this time he didn't know if he was coming or going.

His slack suit was not moving, but he held his hands close to his sides, just in case. When the street car arrived, he got on cautiously and took a seat in back, all by himself.

For a few blocks he rode in peace. Then the car began to fill up with passengers. He eyed them malignantly, hoping no one would choose the vacant seat at his side.

A fat lady bustled down the aisle and caught his eye. She returned his stony stare with an obvious sniff, and plopped her poundage squarely next to Mr. Fooze, squeezing him against the window.

The pressure irritated Mr. Fooze. It also seemed to irritate his clothes.

For suddenly Mr. Fooze felt his slack suit squirm. The arms flapped out and the trousers showed a tendency to cross. Inasmuch as his legs were not crossed, the trousers ballooned forth very obviously. Mr. Fooze struggled silently to maintain his composure—to say nothing of his sanity.

Suddenly his necktie flew up and began to curl around his neck.

The fat lady turned and noticed the green, snake-like tie as it squirmed along his throat.

Mr. Fooze forced a smile. The fat lady grunted.

He pushed the tie down hastily. But he was beginning to perspire.

Once again the tie flew up. It crept across and brushed the fat lady's fourth chin.

Mr. Fooze tried to yank his tie back. But too late. It wrapped itself around the fat lady's neck.

"Eeeek!" she complained, shrilly. "Take it away!"

SEVERAL passengers turned their heads and stared. It was a bad moment for Mr. Fooze, who was pulling at his necktie with both hands. To the spectators, it looked as though he were trying to strangle the woman with his tie.

Evidently she had the same opinion. Bringing up her heavy purse, she banged Mr. Fooze across the top of the head. The purse opened and Mr. Fooze received a shower of powder grains and hairpins on his head.

"Pardon me," he wheezed. "My tie is caught—wait—"

He snapped the tie back and tucked it inside his slack shirt. The fat woman glared but settled back in her seat.

Mr. Fooze really was perspiring, now. He reached into his trouser pocket and pulled out a handkerchief to mop his face.

"Why you beast!" screamed the fat lady, rising to her feet.

Mr. Fooze glanced down. He was mopping his face with his handkerchief —what was wrong with that?

Just one thing. What Mr. Fooze held in his hand was not a handkerchief.

He was mopping his face with a pair of pink bloomers!

How the bloomers had become lodged in his pocket he didn't know. Perhaps they had climbed in of their own accord, he thought wildly.

As if to prove it, the bloomers suddenly slipped from his hand to his lap. There they stood up on their diminutive legs and began to dance. A hideous quivering convulsed the panties as the bloomers shimmied.

"Beast!" shrieked the fat lady. "Take them away!"

"They're not mine," yelled Mr. Fooze. As if to prove it, he rose to his feet and bolted down the aisle of the street car.

Passengers turned and giggled. Mr. Fooze heard guffaws and titters. He paused in his frantic race. Paused and stared at the pursuing pink panties.

The bloomers were chasing him down the aisle!

In a panic, he turned and headed back for his seat, jumping over the pink barrier. Almost at once the bloomers followed him. Back to the fat lady he ran, with panties at his heels.

She was on her feet, waiting for him.

"These bloomers — I swear they're not mine!" repeated Mr. Fooze desperately.

"Oh!" wailed the fat lady. "Do you mean to say those are *my* bloomers? Then you must have—oh, you *monster!*"

Down came the purse again, splitting on Mr. Fooze's head. The fat lady charged, and he ran; glancing back he saw her trip over the dancing panties as he jumped off the street car on the corner stop.

"Merciful God!" breathed Mr. Fooze, in a truly devout voice, as he regained his breath on the corner.

He turned and trudged the remaining three blocks to the office. He slowly recovered his composure as he noted that his clothing was unruffled. Nothing moved unnaturally. Perhaps his

troubles were over. The effect of the strange liquid must be wearing off. At least, he hoped it was.

His coming ordeal would be bad enough without further complications.

Mr. Fooze entered the office and tensed himself for the business at hand.

It was five minutes to eleven by the office clock.

At eleven o'clock he would be on the spot. On the spot before a microphone in the big showroom on the second floor.

MR. FOOZE'S office was not, strictly speaking, an office. It was the business quarters of the Hummenkapper Clothing Company—manufacturers and designers of an exclusive line of men's clothing.

In the office downstairs, Mr. Fooze, along with a large staff, labored over plans for "merchandising campaigns" and "men's style shows" designed to sell Hummenkapper garments to out of town buyers for men's shops all over the country.

Today such a style show was in preparation. At eleven, a hundred clothing buyers and style specialists would gather in the showroom on the second floor. One by one, fashion models would walk out and display Hummenkapper styles for the coming season, while an announcer read his script over a public address microphone.

Mr. Fooze was to be that announcer.

It was really a spot. His boss had chosen him for the assignment after long deliberation.

"You'd better do the trick," he had snarled. "Hummenkapper needs to push merchandise. Write a script and read it as if you meant it. If not—"

The boss had made a familiar gesture, drawing his thumb across his throat.

Mr. Fooze was afraid of public address systems, but he was more afraid of his boss. Mr. Gnasher, of the Hummenkapper Clothing Company, was a hard man. A very hard man. It was a common rumor around the office that Mr. Gnasher had been named after his teeth.

Therefore, Mr. Fooze had worked hard on his script. He had rehearsed the reading of it for many hours. When they told him at the last minute he would have to appear in a slack suit—a new Hummenkapper style—he hadn't dared refuse.

That was why he had the ridiculous garment on. He hoped it would behave.

Glancing at his tie in the mirror and fixing the crease of his rumpled trousers, Mr. Fooze glided into the office, ignored the giggling stenographers, grabbed his script, and raced upstairs.

They were all up there—all the house salesmen and officials, sitting down in front on hard chairs. On either side, the buyers lolled, puffing cigars and exchanging the kind of stories salesmen always exchange.

Mr. Fooze looked through the curtains at his audience and gulped. The script rattled in his hand as he saw a spotlight go on from the back of the house and focus at the microphone that stood on the bare platform before the velvet curtains.

He would be standing out there in just a minute.

Mr. Fooze glanced nervously at the audience once more. Hard, brutal faces—coarse, crude men who would undoubtedly snicker when they saw him in a slack suit. Their business was selling new fashions, not wearing them. Most of them were dressed in unpressed, sloppy tweeds.

The models began coming out of their dressing rooms and lining up behind Mr. Fooze. As he gave them

their cues from the script, they would come out and parade on the platform. Mr. Fooze looked at their calm self-possession and trembled. How could they take it so casually?

On his next peek, Mr. Fooze saw his boss, sitting down in front.

Mr. Gnasher was glancing at his watch and frowning. As little Mr. Fooze stared, the boss began to mutter something under his breath and tap his foot on the floor.

It was time to start.

Tugging his necktie into place, Mr. Fooze wobbled out onto the platform, his script waving in his jittery hand.

Clutching the microphone for support, he began to read the opening greeting of his script.

THE sound of his own voice, magnified by the microphone, reassured him. Ignoring the murmurs from his audience, he settled down to delivering his message before introducing the first clothing model.

"And so I say to you," Mr. Fooze orated, "that if you men stock up on the new Hummenkapper fall models, you will have a record of sales this year that you will be proud of. As a matter of fact, this should be one of your most fiscal years! And now, I present to you—"

An indignant grunt came from somewhere in the audience. Mr. Fooze paused to locate it. Just as he feared, it had been Mr. Gnasher's grunt.

Mr. Fooze started again. Again, the grunt.

What was wrong?

Fooze looked down at his script. Then he saw it.

Stabbing at his script—sticking straight out from his neck in a livid line—was Mr. Fooze's elusive necktie!

Mr. Fooze clutched the devilish cravat in his right hand and crammed it back into his slack shirt.

He opened his mouth to speak, then let it hang open in amazement.

Something moved on his neck. Something moved swiftly. He glanced down as a whistle came from the audience.

His necktie was untying itself!

Faster than his eye or clutching hand could follow, the green cravat slithered off his neck!

Like a wriggling worm it crawled down the side of the microphone. Mr. Fooze dropped his script and tried to grab it. Too late. The audience was in an uproar.

As he stooped to pick up his script, Mr. Fooze felt strange movements across his chest. One by one, the buttons on his slack shirt slipped from their buttonholes. His shirt opened by itself!

Mr. Fooze threw his hands over his head in dismay.

This was the wrong thing to do. It gave his shirt a perfect opportunity to bunch up and shoot over his head. He felt the sleeves crawl over his arms. In a second, his entire shirt had twisted itself from his torso.

"Take it off!" yelled a raucous voice from the crowd. Above it Mr. Fooze heard the barking cough of Mr. Gnasher. He tried to locate the boss in the audience.

As he peered, something happened at his waist. Looking down, he saw the belt of his trousers unbuckle suddenly, swiftly. His pants marched down his legs!

Mr. Fooze almost tripped as the trousers bunched at his ankles. He leaped aside and they came off, pulling his sandals with them. Mr. Fooze stood before the laughing throng in his underwear, as his socks joined the parade and wiggled off his bare toes.

In utter horror he saw his shirt, trousers, necktie and socks fluttering

before the microphone in mid-air. He made a grab at the garments.

"What's coming off here?" he shrieked.

He got his answer very promptly.

As though the words were a cue, his underwear quickly unbuttoned. The sleeves crawled up his scrabbling arms, jerked past his shoulders. The garment fell. So did Mr. Fooze. He lay on the platform, kicking his legs as the underwear crawled off his body.

Clad in a pair of bright green Hummenkapper shorts, Mr. Fooze wobbled to his feet.

Amidst the screams of the mob, he dashed up and down the platform, chasing his clothes. His underwear was bowing to the audience, and as the applause rose, his pants dipped in recognition. The shirt had both sleeves over its head in a prize-fighter's gesture and the socks were jumping over the wriggling necktie.

Mr. Fooze made one despairing dive for his galloping garments. As he did so, his shorts started to join the party.

It was too much to bear—and much too much too bare.

With a yowl of panic, he bolted from the stage. Bursting through the excited knot of models on the side, Mr. Fooze ran a naked race through the hall.

COMING upon a window dummy in the corridor, he yanked savagely at the clothing adorning it. He pulled on a shirt, a pair of pants, and a suit coat. The outfit was a good eight sizes too large for him, and the coat rose almost to the top of his ears, but Mr. Fooze didn't care. He felt like hiding.

Ignoring the shouts from the stage behind him, he galloped down the stairs and out of the building. He clambered aboard the first street car and headed home, his senses reeling.

Mr. Fooze was a broken man, and he knew it. His spirits fell when he thought of telling his wife, and so did his oversize trousers.

Mr. Fooze staggered into the house, dragging both his saggy face and saggy trousers.

Dora was waiting for him in the hall. She ignored both his long face and long pants and flung her arms around his neck.

"Oh, darling!" she whispered. "You're wonderful!"

Mr. Fooze raised his eyebrows. Then he stepped back, clutched at his belt buckle, and raised his drooping trousers.

"What do you mean?" he muttered.

"Mr. Gnasher called up from the office," Dora told him, ecstatically. "He said he just couldn't wait to congratulate you."

"Congratulate me?"

"Oh, don't be so modest, Sidney! Mr. Gnasher told me all about your stunt, and I think it was so cute. Mr. Gnasher said your new strip tease method of displaying men's fashions will have the whole industry interested."

"Ulp!" gulped Mr. Fooze.

"He said he doesn't know how you did it, but if you can teach it to the rest of the models he'll make you promotion manager. He said all the buyers are talking about it—they got such a kick out of the novelty."

"So I'm not fired?" whispered Mr. Fooze, under his breath.

"What did you say, darling?"

"I said, it's just the way I figured," Mr. Fooze lied. "Well, that's that."

"I'm so proud of you," Dora breathed. "You know, Sidney, I've been thinking. A man like you—in the style business—must really look his best. And I think from now on I ought to do the washing and ironing.

Really. I'm getting pretty sick of radio serials anyway."

Mr. Fooze beamed.

"Well, all's well that ends well," he murmured, taking Dora in his arms.

Suddenly his wife drew back.

"Oh, I almost forgot!"

"Forgot what?"

"There's a visitor waiting to see you in the parlor."

"Visitor? Who?"

"He wouldn't give me his name. Said he had to wait and see you. It was very important. Maybe you'd better go in and find out what he wants."

"Awferheavensakes!" growled Mr. Fooze. "Another salesman! Watch me get rid of this baby."

Pulling up his trousers, the little man walked briskly into the parlor.

IT WAS dim in the fading twilight. The tigerskin rug glared up with eyes and teeth. It looked rather ghastly.

Then Mr. Fooze saw the glare of other eyes and other teeth—the eyes and teeth of his visitor. These eyes and teeth were worse than those of the rug, he quickly decided.

The visitor sat in the easy chair. He was a tall, thin man with a huge, domed forehead. His bald, bony head bobbed, and he raised a gaunt, lined visage to confront Mr. Fooze with a knowing grin.

A claw-like hand reached out, and a long finger stabbed at Mr. Fooze's chest.

"Here you are," rasped the stranger. "You're Fooze, eh?"

"Yes. Who are you, might I ask?"

"You might." The bony man grinned. "And I might tell you. I'm Doctor Kranoff."

"Doctor Kranoff?"

"That's right. A friend of Professor Beaker's."

"But Professor Beaker is not here. He—"

"I know all about it. And that's why *I'm* here." Again Doctor Kranoff grinned. Suddenly he erased the grimace from his gaunt features and rose to tower over Mr. Fooze.

"Where is it?" he grated.

"Where is what?"

"You know—the stuff," said Doctor Kranoff, hoarsely. "Where is the Elixir?"

"I don't know what you mean."

"Don't try and deceive me," growled Doctor Kranoff, his bony fingers writhing in excitement. "Where is the Elixir of Life?"

"Elixir of Life?"

"Of course, you stupid dolt! What do you think old Beaker was working on in his chemical laboratory upstairs? A bio-chemical formula, a synthesis of protoplasmic forms capable of rendering inanimate objects animate. Elixir of Life is what the ancients called it. They never found the formula. Beaker did. He was completing it and I knew it. I wanted to share the discovery. He wouldn't let me. Now I'm here to get it."

"But I don't know anything about Beaker's work," objected Mr. Fooze, hastily.

"Then I'll have to search the place," said Doctor Kranoff.

"Look here now—this is my home. You can't go searching my house this way."

Doctor Kranoff laughed. There was nothing funny for him to laugh at, and there was no mirth in his cackle.

"Listen, friend," he whispered. "Do you think I'm going to be stopped at the last moment? Nothing will stop me from getting my hands on this great discovery, after all I've done. Who do you suppose slipped the nitroglycerine in old Beaker's mixing vat the day he

went through the roof?"

"You mean you murdered Professor Beaker?" gasped Mr. Fooze.

"Exactly," said Doctor Kranoff. "And I'll do as much for you unless you let me search the house."

Mr. Fooze realized that Doctor Kranoff was a man of his word, because the tall, gaunt scientific figure suddenly pulled a pistol from his hip pocket and levelled it at Mr. Fooze's falling waistline.

"Let's try the attic, first," suggested the Doctor, pleasantly. "By the way—not a word to your wife. Or I'll have to use two bullets."

Mr. Fooze couldn't have said a word if he wanted to. His throat was dry—parched. And he couldn't very well move his tongue anyway, for his heart was in his mouth.

Silently, he led Doctor Kranoff up the stairs. The pistol prodded him in the small of the back.

ONCE in the attic, the Doctor set to work. He ransacked the piles of debris on the floor. His clawing fingers swept through the remainder of the bottles and glassware.

"Cagliostro's curse!" he growled. "Nothing here! Let's see your cellar."

Obediently, Mr. Fooze led his ghastly guest down the stairs.

Dora was listening to the radio as they passed through the parlor.

"Where are you going?" she called.

"I'm just taking this man down to look at the furnace," lied Mr. Fooze.

Dora returned to her radio and Mr. Fooze entered the cellar. The Doctor quickly surveyed the old bottles and miscellany of scientific paraphernalia gathered from Professor Beaker's room.

"It isn't here," he muttered.

"You see," said Mr. Fooze. "That proves there is no such thing."

Doctor Kranoff patted his pistol. He smiled sweetly.

"Not so fast," he answered. "Did you move this junk down here to the cellar?"

"Why—yes."

"Then you found the Elixir of Life," the Doctor declared. "Found it and hid it away somewhere in the house. Come on—we'll search every room until I get my hands on it."

Silently they ascended the stairs.

"Where is the bedroom?" demanded the Doctor.

"This way."

They entered the bedroom. Doctor Kranoff dived for the closet. He rummaged around, always keeping Mr. Fooze covered with his pistol.

Mr. Fooze got nervous. He knew the blue bottle was safely locked in the parlor desk downstairs. If he could only head this madman off somehow!

"By the way," he gulped, "just why do you want the Elixir of Life, anyway?"

"Oh, that?" chuckled Doctor Kranoff. "It so happens I have a few cadavers knocking around my own laboratories. Medical specimens — condemned and executed criminals, mostly. I think it might be interesting to reanimate them, don't you?"

"No!" wailed Mr. Fooze, emphatically.

"Well, either I find the Elixir and use it on those corpses," said the Doctor, "or else I'll be adding a new corpse to my collection shortly."

Mr. Fooze felt his heart sink within him at these words. His trousers sagged considerably, too. He pulled them up.

Doctor Kranoff was going through the bureau drawers now, ransacking them with muttered oaths and imprecations.

"Not a damned thing!" he snorted.

"Really," said Mr. Fooze. "You're making an awful mistake, Doctor. There's no such thing as an Elixir of Life around here. It must have been blown up with Professor Beaker."

"Say, I never thought of that!" exclaimed Doctor Kranoff. "Do you really think so?"

"Sure. It was a terrific blast. The whole attic went through the roof. Practically everything was lost."

"Just my luck!" groaned the Doctor. "I used too much nitro-glycerine, I suppose."

"Everybody makes mistakes," Mr. Fooze consoled him. "You can see there's no Elixir of Life in this house. Why don't you just forget about it? Go home and play with your corpses or something."

"Maybe I'd better," sighed the demented medico. "Just this one drawer here. Your wife's things, eh? Well, looks like nothing doing—oooops!"

DOCTOR KRANOFF opened the top bureau drawer to reveal a stack of pink lingerie. As he reached in to ruffle the garments, something stirred.

Something uncoiled like a serpent—like a pair of serpents. Something raised a brown, sinuous length from the bureau drawer.

Doctor Kranoff drew back aghast as a pair of silk stockings rose from the drawer, jumped lightly to the floor, and began to march around the room.

"Aha!" yelled Doctor Kranoff.

He plunged his hand into the drawer. A pair of gloves suddenly scuttled forth to the bureau top. Two spiders poised before the Doctor's image in the mirror.

Scampering up the shiny surface, the right glove thumbed the Doctor's nose in the mirror. The other glove began to open a powder box.

"So!"

Doctor Kranoff wheeled and held the pistol at Mr. Fooze's chest.

"Come on," he said. "You're through fooling, now. You almost got away with it, but not quite. You have that Elixir—this proves it. You've hidden it away. Lead me to it."

"But—"

"Lead me to it this minute," said Doctor Kranoff, "or I'll arrange matters so that you'll need the Elixir of Life for yourself."

Mr. Fooze gave up. He paused only long enough to recapture the gloves and stockings and replace them in the drawer.

"I'm licked," he sighed. "The bottle is downstairs, in the parlor. Follow me."

Down the stairs they marched. Mr. Fooze felt the muzzle of the pistol boring into his back. He had never been quite so bored in all his life.

The Doctor forced him into the parlor so quickly he almost tripped over the rug.

"Hand it over," snapped Doctor Kranoff. "Quickly, now."

Mr. Fooze, trembling violently, tottered over to the desk. His shaking fingers fumbled with the key.

He pulled the drawer open. He groped for the little blue bottle, found it.

He drew it forth, held it up to the light. It was half-filled. Elixir of Life!

His hands shook.

But Doctor Kranoff's hand, holding the pistol, was quite firm and steady. So was his voice.

"Hand it over," said Doctor Kranoff.

Mr. Fooze extended his hand . . .

SOME ten minutes later a haggard Mr. Fooze lurched out of the parlor and fell into his wife's waiting arms.

"What happened?" gasped Dora. "All that noise—"

"Elixir of Life!" grunted Mr. Fooze.

"What Elixir?"

So Mr. Fooze told her. Told her about the blue bottle and the clothes, and Doctor Kranoff, who murdered Professor Beaker to get his secret concoction. He told about giving the Elixir of Life to Doctor Kranoff at the point of a gun.

"But I don't understand, Sidney," said Dora. "What was all that screaming and yelling in the parlor? And what did I see when I looked out of the window—that Doctor running down the road with that awful whatever-it-was at his heels?"

"Never mind," smiled Mr. Fooze. "It's all over, now. The Doctor is gone for good, I imagine, and so is the Elixir. Let's forget the whole thing ever happened."

"Tell me what happened," Dora demanded. "What was all that growling and shrieking?"

"It's very simple," Mr. Fooze explained, happily. "You see, Doctor Kranoff was chased out of the house."

"Don't tell me that—"

"Right," grinned Mr. Fooze. "My hands trembled so that when I held out the Elixir of Life, I dropped the bottle. Spilled it right smack in the middle of our tiger skin rug!"

THE END

VIGNETTES OF FAMOUS SCIENTISTS

By ALEXANDER BLADE

Thales

He was the first of the Greek philosophers and chief of the famed seven "wise men" of ancient times in Greece

THALES was the earliest of the Greek philosophers, and the founder of the Ionic or Physical school. He is reputed to have been a native of Miletus, a very famous ancient Greek city located on the western coast of Asia Minor at the mouth of the Maeander river. There is some controversy as to whether he was of Phoenician extraction, but was more probably a native Milesian of noble birth, the son of Examyus and Cleobuline.

He was chief of the seven "wise men" of Greece; and in later times amongst the ancients his fame was remarkable. The advice which he gave to his fellow-countrymen before Ionia was ruined—"that the Ionians should constitute one general council in Teos, as the most central of the twelve cities, and that the remaining cities should nevertheless be governed as independent states"—is noteworthy. The appellation "wise man" was conferred on him not only for his political sagacity, but also for his scientific eminence.

He was an excellent mathematician and the first among the Greeks to set aside the current explanations of the universe and look for a first principle which might be grasped through reason.

Being possessed of engineering capacities, he was engaged to construct an embankment along a portion of the shores of the river Halys. He was also a merchant of importance, and traveled extensively, particularly in Egypt, where he became familiar with such astronomical and mathematical knowldege as by then had accummulated among the priesthood.

As a result of his astronomical knowledge he became famous by his prediction of the eclipse of the sun on May 28, 585 B.C. Thales' fame amongst the ancients must have been largely due to this achievement—the fact that the eclipse did actually take place during a battle between the Medes and the Lydians—that it was a total eclipse—and that it led to a lasting peace between the contending nations. Thales had foretold the eclipse to the Ionians, and fixed the year in which it actually did take place.

Being a wealthy man, he decided to devote the rest of his life to philosophy. He taught that the fundamental element of which all things was composed was water. That the earth floated

upon it; that it was the cause of earthquakes and volcanoes; that it was the main component of all vegetation—which apparently could not exist without it; of all animal life that lived on vegetable food, and hence by necessity, of all flesh-eating animals, including man.

According to some of his commentators he regarded earth (soil and rocks), air and fire as also of elementary character, though of secondary importance. He is credited with having believed that the earth was of the form of a sphere, and that the year consisted of exactly 365 days. He expressed his views in words only and committed nothing to writing.

The important feature of Thale's work was that he founded the geometry of lines, which was essentially abstract in its character. The Egyptian priests had only the geometry of surfaces, that is a geometry consisting of some simple quadratures and elementary cubatures. Thales introduced abstract geometry, the object of which is to establishe precise relations between the different parts of a figure, so that some of them could be definitely found by means of others. This was a phenomenon quite new in the world. The following discoveries in geometery are attributed to Thales: 1. The circle is bisected by its diameter. 2. The angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal. 3. When two straight lines intersect the vertically opposite angles are equal. 4. The angle in a semi-circle is a right angle.

Two applications to practical problems are also attributed to him: 1. The determination of the distance of a ship at sea. 2. The determination of the height of a pyramid hy means of the length of its shadow. The shadow was measured at the hour of the day when a man's shadow is the same length as himself.

In a scientific point of view, Thales founded the geometry of lines which has ever since remained the principal part of geometry. He laid the foundation of algehra and laid the foundation of the methods of measurement of heights and distances.

As to the astronomical knowledge of Thales—he discovered that the circuit of the sun between the solstices is not always uniform. He determined the diameter of the sun to be 720th part of the zodiac. He remarked on the constellation of the Lesser Bear and instructed his countrymen to steer by it instead of the Great Bear—all in addition to the prediction of the solar eclipse.

Thales, whether a real or a legendary character, represents the beginnings of Greek intellectual life. Before his day much information about the ordinary phenomena of life had been gathered in Egypt, Chaldea, Phoenecia, and to a lesser extent in India and China.

But life was difficult among all those people. for they occupied regions where climatic conditions were severe, and the struggle for existence a pitiful one. To the Greeks, however, had been given a pleasanter homeland, a more genial climate, and an environment that encouraged thoughtfulness and a desire to understand the causes of things.

Thus meager and futile as the doctrine of Thales was, all the Greek schools, with the solitary exception of that of Pythagoras, took their origin from it. Not in name only, but also in fact, Thales, the first of the Ionian physicists, was the founder of the philosophy of Greece.

★ NOTES ON THE EEL ★

OF all living things, few have puzzled scientists as much as the eel. This snake-like fish succeeded in evading the invcstigations of mankind for a long period of time. One of the most curious questions raised by the mysterious actions of the eel on the earth was how was it born and where was it born. The facts that no eggs were ever found and that the male eel was never seen heightened the curiosity. Many theories were expounded as to the origin or birth of the eel. For example, Aristotle, in the 4th century B.C., asserted that eels arose from earthworms through spontaneous generation. The early Greeks, failing to find a male eel, appointed Jupiter as the father of all eels. On the other hand, a great Roman naturalist said the eels reproduced themselves by knocking themselves to pieces against rugged rock and that the little pieces came to life.

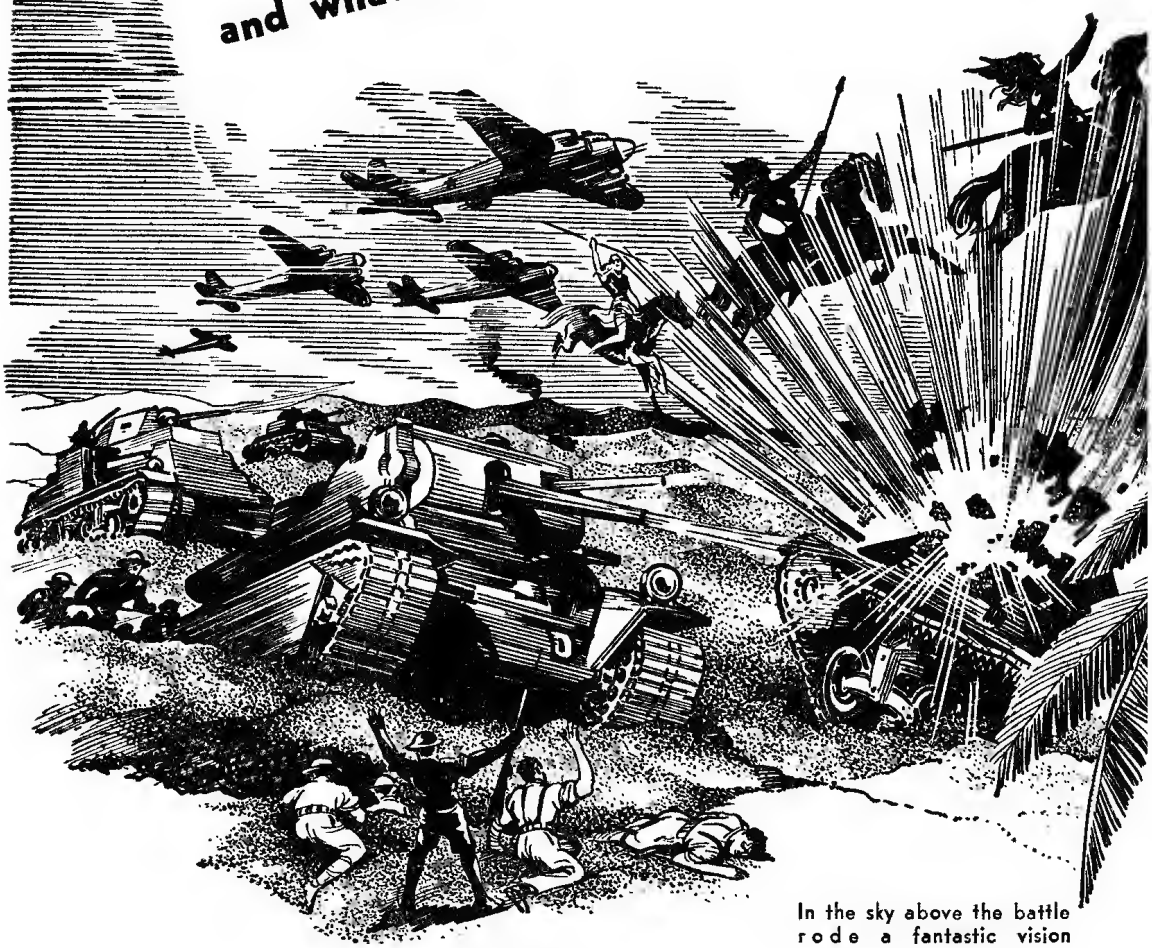
Finally, in the early part of the 19th century, scientists definitely showed that there was both a female and a male eel. This, however, only partially solved the problem. It was not until the early 20th century that a Danish explorer started on a conscientious and tireless search for the breeding place of the eel. After 15 years of ceaseless endeavor he succeeded in establishing the breeding place of the American eel. It is northeast of Puerto Rico and southeast of Bermuda where there exists a huge area of water known as the Sargasso Sea. This discovery did lead the way to a more thorough understanding of the life cycle of the eel.

The eel after being hatched starts on its journey from the Sargasso Sea to some distant fresh-water stream. The female travels a far distance up some stream, while the male remains in the lagoons and bays. (This is the reason why the early scientists failed to discover a male eel.) They remain here until the migratory instinct, which comes when the eel is from seven to fifteen years of age, drives them back to the sea. They usually travel 2,500 miles in the journey to their mating grounds. Although science has unveiled much of the mystery surrounding the eel, there is still room for extensive scientific investigation.

WARRIOR MAIDS OF LIBYA

By LEROY YERXA

On the wings of the desert khamsin came ghostly horsewomen. Who were they, and what was their mission in this war?



In the sky above the battle rode a fantastic vision



THE Americans were in Tunis, the greatest story of the war had broken, and I was in the soup. More accurately, I was a war correspondent buried up to my ears in the sand of the Lybian Desert. A *khamsin,* hot murderous wind of the desert, was filling our clothes and filing our tempers with sharp, cutting bits of sand. I hunched back as far as I could under the tarp that covered me and swore until my throat choked up and I couldn't speak any more. Then I looked at Howard Frazer and kept on swearing under my breath.

Everything was fine as long as Frazer and myself stayed with the troops up around Tunis. Bombers were going in every day for a crack at Tunis and our dispatches to New York were the same, week in, week out. Finally "Inkpot" Jameson, my boss on the *Mirror*

got bored with the stuff I was paying cable rates on. It had been just two weeks since I received his cable through the London office.

SUGGEST YOU DESERTWARD GET FEEL OF DESERT FIGHTING

Howard Frazer had come along at my suggestion. He was as tired as I, waiting for the Yanks to make their final march into Tunis. We checked the map for a spot east of Ghadames where a small band of Yanks had been cleaning up bands of renegade Nazis. We finally got a station wagon and slugged hell out of the desert for a week, then we bogged down to the axles. We caught a ride on a supply truck into camp. Another week, and here we were half buried in the sand, listening to a Tommy tell us he had just picked up the news of Tunis' fall by radio.

Frazer looked across the bleak trench at me. He wanted to bite me, I could tell by his voice.

"I listen to your talk and find myself five hundred miles away from the first break I've had since I came to Africa!"

I was silent. Tunis had fallen the day before. Other New York papers carried the headline at this very minute. Our papers would have to rehash their stories because we were buried alive in the center of a twisting, gyrating mess of sand.

After a while the storm stopped and we crawled out of the sand. We found the cook shack still standing, so we crawled in and ate beans and bread. Water supplies were low so I only moistened my throat and tongue, crawled into a corner of the shack and tried to go to sleep.

HOWARD FRAZER and I were in a small valley the Yanks called Hell's Acre, all around us was the desert. Hell's Acre lay between a ridge and low sand hills a mile away. Nazi tanks and heavy guns were holding on in those hills with a tenacity I was forced to admire.

Why the Nazis stuck it out I never could figure. There were about a thousand of them, just too ornery to give up. The Yank commander, Captain Barth Rodman had been giving them hell now for a week. The score was even. Eight hundred Yanks sweated and cursed through murderous days at Hell's Acre, wondering whether they would be called north to let the Nazis stew in their own juices now that Tunis was taken.

I was lying there thinking about all this, and finally the watch on my wrist said it was close to three in the morning. I fell asleep, and didn't awaken until Howard Frazer shook my shoulder.

"Reg, wake up. Hell's breaking loose."

"Huh? Let it break. It'll be cooler there than it is here."

"Shut up and listen," he was on his knees, his dark, eager face close to mine, "we got a story that'll knock the Tunis thing into page four."

That *did* sound interesting. I sat up and slipped on my boots.

"Lead me to it," I whispered.

I followed his dark figure from the shack. He said nothing until we were close to Captain Barth Rodman's quarters. Then he turned and I could see that he was excited. Something really was breaking!

"A patrol came in ten minutes ago," he said hurriedly. "Honest to God, Reg, the story those men tell will make Hitler himself howl at the moon."

I heard voices buzzing within the small tar paper shack where Rodman had his headquarters. Frazer knocked on the door and went in. I bent my head to escape the top of the door. Captain Rodman rose to greet us.

"Johnson, I told Frazer to call you. I want you to hear the story these men have to tell. It's fantastic, and I want a newsman's opinion."

Barth Rodman was no fool. If he thought the story was important and took the time to call me in, I was flattered to listen.

HE turned toward three Yanks who had come in from the patrol. They were good-looking kids, young and covered with dust from head to foot. One of them, a thin-faced, eager-eyed kid was a corporal.

At a nod from Rodman, he began.

"Like I said before," he spoke in jerky, excited sentences, "we—Private Wenton and Private Harden and myself —were close to the Nazi line. We spotted a couple of tanks and wanted to line them up so the guns could pick them off when we came back. It was dark as hell up there. I was getting finicky about things in general. We knew there was a *khamsin* coming up and wanted to make it back ahead of the storm. We turned and were crawling back into Hell's Acre when the wind came down on us."

He stopped speaking for a moment, his eyes wide with the memory of what they had seen. Then he went on.

"We hugged the sand with our bellies, hoping the storm would pass over. The sand was so thick overhead that it made a black curtain. But we could see pretty well in the direction of the the German lines, where the sand was really kicking up . . ."

He paused dramatically.

"Right in the middle of that storm, riding like fury, was a woman on a white horse. So help me, Captain Rodman, she wore a l i g h t d r e s s that whipped around her body. I'da thought the sand would have ripped the skin off her body."

The kid was crazy, I decided. I took a quick look toward the Captain and saw he was silent, attentive. Frazer, also, seemed to have faith in the boy. I decided to hear him out.

"As I was saying, this babe rode right over our heads as t h o u g h she didn't see us. She carried a long spear raised in her hand and she had a helmet with wings sticking up each side of it. Then right over the middle of the Nazi camp, it happened."

"What happened?" I b l u r t e d out. "Did a dragon eat her up?"

The corporal turned a pitying eye on me.

"Wait until I'm finished," he said coldly. "Just wait."

Then, at a nod from Rodman, he went on.

"Like I said, right over the Nazi camp she seemed to stop in mid-air. Her horse stood there in that cloud of sand, head high and body reared up. A long scream came from the woman's lips and she plunged the spear down into the ground before those two tanks we had spotted."

The corporal stared straight at me.

"Them two tanks exploded just as the spear hit the g r o u n d, and the woman on the horse wheeled around and dashed away toward the mountains."

HE stopped talking, wiped his forehead and sat down. He looked like a small school boy waiting to be whipped. Rodman turned to me.

"This isn't the first time these warrior maids have been seen," he said. "I waited until I was sure the men weren't dreaming them up to pass the time. Seven men have seen and described them to me. Every man did it in privacy and was sworn to secrecy before he left this office."

I shrugged my shoulders.

"Interesting, Captain Rodman," I admitted, "but I can't send my paper a story like that. I'd be laughed out of Africa."

"That isn't the reason I called you in," he said soberly. "If this was a fairy tale, I'd dismiss it. Unfortunately it isn't.

"If these women had been seen only in the Nazi camp, I would thank my lucky stars and try to forget it. Unfortunately that isn't the case."

I leaned forward against the desk. Frazer was at my side, mouth open a bit with eagerness.

"You recall that a truck blew up yesterday morning, killing three men and destroying a load of ammunition?"

I remembered the mess on the road and nodded. The captain went on.

"The truth of the matter was, I was close to that truck when it went up. The *khamsin* was thick at the time. *I saw a girl like the one the corporal describes dive out of the air and throw her spear into the tarp of the truck. That's what blew it up!*"

BROTHER, take it from me, you may think a captain in the United States Army is going nuts, but you don't tell him so. The Lybian Desert does strange things to a man's mind. I'll admit that hearing the same story from several directions was convincing. Mass suggestion, however, is a powerful thing. It was quite possible that the story had been passed around until it *seemed* like the real thing. I caught my breath at Captain Rodman's words.

"You actually saw this rider yourself?" I asked solemnly.

"Saw her very clearly," he nodded, "and if you think the desert is getting me, Johnson, banish the thought. My mind is as clear as a bell."

I tried to cover the blush of guilt that spread over my face.

"It's not that I don't believe what you *thought* you saw," I said, "but, Captain Rodman, you'll admit yourself that this sounds out of the question. If there were any women down in this sand-blown hell, they couldn't ride horses and blow trucks and tanks up with a spear."

"But they do!" the corporal protested.

I turned on him, shaking my head stubbornly.

"How the hell can they?" I snapped. "I'm a newspaperman. I've seen some queer things in this world, but when you show me your flying horses and warrior women, I'll believe them. Until then I'm blaming the whole thing on this cursed, sun-blasted desert."

Captain Rodman looked irritated.

"I called you in because I thought you'd be interested in the tale," he said. "If you stay at Hell's Acre much longer, you'll see all this for yourself."

"I appreciate your help, sir." I took his hand. "I'm just not good at believing such stuff at this time of night. By God, sir, if I sent a story like that to New York, I might as well start running toward South Africa and stay there. My paper would send a dog catcher after me."

I went back to my shack. Frazer followed.

"I don't know what to make of it," he said quietly, "Rodman doesn't usually imagine things."

"Suppose you hang out a sky hook and trap one of them babes for me," I grunted, "or else shut up and go to sleep."

Across Hell's Acre the Germans started their morning barrage. The sand outside jumped under their hits.

WHILE I waited for the barrage to lift, I thought back to the time I first came to Africa. That had been

at Cairo. I'd met Gertrude Hunt, correspondent for Associated News, there. Gertrude was a clever, resourceful kid, about twenty-four years old and plenty witty. I figured I had made enough of an impression on her to merit a followup later on.

"I'll be in Damascus while the British get established there," she said when we parted at Cairo. "When you get tired of eating sand, come up and see me. I've got a nice room, swimming pool and all that."

I promised I'd do it, and now it seemed was the time. I went to the radio shack and radioed Cairo and dispatched a cable to Jameson, asking for the change. Sometime later I got a reply.

OKAY TRY DAMASCUS FEW DAYS ADVISE ANYTHING NEW.
JAMESON.

I packed quickly, found Rodman and asked him for a jeep to take me into Ghadames.

He looked at me from under dusty brows.

"So you're going to ignore this warrior maid story and head for civilization?"

"Look, Captain," I protested, "you know as well as I do that there's something wrong with that story. Haven't you thought over the possibility of seeing those flying horses just because others told of seeing them, and the story growing so vivid that it got control of the whole camp?"

He shrugged, as though he didn't want to say more about them.

"Fairy tales, we'll call them," he agreed, "but I'd feel better if these phantoms would pick on the Nazis and leave us alone."

He walked swiftly across the sand and I followed him to a paintless and battered station wagon. Slim Waters, a mechanic, was leaning over the open hood. Slim was a sallow-faced Iowa farm boy with sandy hair and a wealth of freckles.

"Waters."

Slim looked up, saw us and grinned. He had a streak of grease across his upper lip.

"Yes, sir?"

"Johnson wants you to take him into Ghadames," Rodman said. "Better leave right away before the sun gets too hot. Stay over and come back out tomorrow night. Keep an eye open for Nazi patrols."

"Yes, sir." Slim wiped the grease from his hands, found a couple of water bags and in ten minutes we pulled out into the desert.

Howard Frazer caught up with us.

"Tell Gert hello for me." He shook my hand and his fingers were tight on mine. "God, how I envy you taking a real bath."

Frazer and I had been pretty close in the past six months. I hated to leave him behind.

"Wire me if anything breaks." He said. "If there's nothing doing in Damascus, come back down in a couple of weeks. Meanwhile, if we run into trouble here, I'll file a ghost story for you."

He grinned.

"Good luck with Gert," he said and turned away. We rode out of camp. The desert road was hard-packed and smooth and the car moved swiftly.

The morning wore along slowly and the wind became stronger. Sand began to obscure vision and finally became so bad, Slim pulled off to the side of the road and halted.

"Have to wait 'til she's over," he said. "Can't see enough to stay on the road."

NOW that I'd started, I wanted to get out of Libya as fast as I

could. I felt pretty grumpy as we sat there, wondering how long the sand-laden wind would howl around the stalled car.

Slim's hand gripped my shoulder suddenly.

"Horses," he said, and the word was pronounced with as much horror as if he had suddenly said, 'forty-foot snakes.' "

I twisted about. The air was so black with the storm that I could see nothing. Clouds of sand rolled across the road towering to a height of a hundred yards. The sun was blotted out completely.

"Elephants too?" I chuckled. "Slim, Hell's Acre is becoming a home for prize screw balls. I don't see a damn thing!"

He turned toward me, his mouth hanging open.

"Honest," he said with a groan. "There was a white horse standing out there on the road ahead of us. The storm cleared for a minute and I saw it as plain as day."

I strained my eyes ahead, wondering just how crazy he *really* was. Then all at once I was glad Captain Rodman wasn't here to hand my laugh back to me. Standing not fifty feet ahead of the truck, head bent downward against the storm was the most noble looking white horse I'd ever seen.

I pushed the car door open quickly, pulling the collar of my coat up around my neck.

Slim said tensely. "Stay away from the thing. It ain't real."

Wordlessly I jerked away from him and slammed the door behind me. The *khamism* took me full in the face and nearly knocked me flat. Sand biting stinging particles of it, swept into my clothes, down my neck, and scratched my face. It worked under my eyeballs and made them sting like red hot needles. I went forward, head down.

The horse was clearly visible now, and I saw the reason it stood so quietly, seemingly disinterested in what was happening close to it.

On the road, lying almost under the animal was the motionless figure of a girl.

WITHIN ten feet, I halted. The beast's head came up. It stood looking at me, and reared up on its hind feet. The eyes were blazing and an angry whinny came from his nostrils.

I heard a command, low and soft, come from the lips of the girl on the road.

The horse dropped to all fours and backed away obediently. I went to the girl quickly. She was lying on her back. Her clothing made me wide-eyed with surprise as I knelt down beside her. She was dressed in a short skirt of soft, brown material. A small, linked metal blouse covered her from the waist up, over which were protective breast plates of heavy brass. Her helmet was also of brass and from its sides feathery, white wings sprouted.

Her hair was soft and brown; and her skin, in spite of the harsh sand and sun of the desert, was white and soft as velvet. The blue eyes that stared up into mine, pleading for help, held a haunting quality of mystery.

She held one hand to her side and I realized that she was in pain.

"You re hurt?" I said.

She was staring at me, eyes full of wonder. She ignored my question.

"You are a man of the desert?"

I drew her hand away from her side and saw an ugly red gash that cut through her skirt and into her side.

With its usual unpredictable

vagaries, the wind died as abruptly as it had begun. Slim came over and stood beside me, looking down at the girl with superstition in his eyes.

"Right now I'm the sandman," I said quickly to the girl. "But you're hurt badly. I'll take you back to the car."

"No—you must not move me away from the horse." She nodded toward the horse. "Put me on his back and I'll be grateful."

"Put her back on the horse, you sap," I said to myself, *"and she'll sweep up into the sky just like Rodman said, and you'll never see her again.* Funny how I suddenly *believed* that! But when things actually happen to *you* . . .

I pulled my first aid kit from under my coat and started to tear away the skirt over her wound.

"How did it happen?" I wondered if I could stall until I found out who she really was.

"My spear," she said, "it slipped from my hand in the dark and hit the ground. It broke and a part of it flew up and cut me. I fell . . ."

"But hard," I admitted. "You need hospital care."

She was silent then, staring at my face as I covered the wound with a bandage and taped it down securely. The blood stopped flowing.

"Where did you come from?" I asked. "I'm going to Ghadames, if the lift will help."

"I ride in the opposite direction," she answered. "To the stronghold of Dido in the mountains."

I KNEW when she said Dido that I was licked. Dido was an ancient queen, dead for centuries, I knew. Captain Rodman and the men at Hell's Acre were right. The girl had come from the sky. There was no possible way a kid could ride across the hundreds of sand-cooked miles to the mountains without being something supernatural. I tried hard not to betray the feeling inside me.

"But surely that is a long journey for a girl to make." I said.

She did not answer for the moment. The air was beginning to clear.

"You will put me astride my horse? I will be grateful for your help."

What the devil could I do? Here was I, Reg Johnson, a war correspondent for the New York *Mirror* trying to fool around with some sort of goddess. It didn't make sense and I could see what a laugh Rodman would have on me, when Slim went back and told him what had happened.

I lifted her in my arms and the big horse started pawing the sand and baring his teeth at me. She spoke to it quickly in a lingo I didn't understand, and it stood quietly alert.

I lifted her carefully to the bare back of the horse and made sure she was secure.

I felt goose pimples rise in my neck. What *would* happen now?

"You—you feel all right to ride?" I asked, swallowing hard.

She nodded.

"My body is fit," she kept those eyes trained like guns, straight into mine and I felt warm under the collar. "You will stay at Ghadames?"

I shook my head.

"Nope. Going to Damascus," I answered. "Don't know where I'll be sent from there."

Her face clouded. She leaned forward, placing a small hand on my shoulder.

"I think you will come back to Libya," she said in a low voice, and without warning kissed my forehead. The horse seemed to leap from the ground and I jumped backward in alarm, sprawling in the sand. I caught a glimpse of the girl, clinging to his

back as he *flew* directly into the last of the *khamsin* and out of sight into the sky!

I stood there, waiting for another look at her, but she was gone. I turned like a blind man and stumbled toward the truck. My foot hit something and reaching down, I picked up a long, lance-like pole. Its end was splintered.

The shaft of her spear!

Clinging to it as though it were one bit of evidence that would save me from going crazy, I went to the station wagon. Slim climbed into the driver's seat, shifted into low gear and we rolled onward without speaking.

Finally he turned in his seat. His face was still pale.

"I don't suppose you'll want Cap Rodman to hear about this?"

"I—I'd appreciate it if you'd forget the whole thing," I admitted, "no use repeating the impossible."

GHADAMES isn't much. A little smelly water, a few trees and a dozen sun-baked huts. A half-dozen British water trucks were around the well.

I saw a Captain Bret Wasserman of the R.A.F. and convinced him that I should fly to Cairo with him. I knew that a plane was available there to take me on to Damascus.

At Cairo I stayed at the Sporting Club over night. Wires from Howard Frazer and Gertrude Hunt were waiting for me the next morning.

FILE STORY BOTH PAPERS NAZI CAMP DESTROYED LAST NIGHT GOD BLESS THE FLYING HORSES

FRAZER

That last line hit me in the face. Had Slim told Frazer about my experience on the road? How had the Yanks, after a deadlock of two months, suddenly wiped out a thousand Nazis over night? I knew the obvious answer, but I didn't dare believe that my help to the girl on the road had anything to do with the destruction of the Germans. And yet, the wire mentioned flying horses . . .

I read Gertrude Hunt's wire then, and for the time being, forgot Hell's Acre and what had happened there.

FRAZER WIRED YOU ON WAY DAMASCUS FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE HURRY HELL'S POPPING

GERT.

A story at last. I sent cables to Jameson and to Frazer's boss at the *Blade,* that the Yanks were withdrawing from Hell's Acre after accomplishing their mission. Then I rushed through six British 'red tape' stations and finally got my passports and press cards cleared for Damascus. It was midnight before the Imperial Airways flying boat left the Nile and drifted up into the cloudiness sky over Egypt. The night was bright and I felt cool and clean away from the biting *khamsin* winds that swept Hell's Acre. There would be no warrior maids riding over Cairo.

I grew drowsy with the hum of the flying boat and thought of Gertrude Hunt waiting for me at Damascus.

"Hell's popping," she had wired. Sounded as though I was about to earn some of the money the *Mirror* had handed out so freely during the past six months.

Damascus had been in the hands of the British since they had pushed out the Vichy French. It was an age old city, filled with Moslems and Arabs who had seen so many conquering armies that they paid little attention

to any force that occupied the place.

I HAD to leave the flying boat and catch a small plane that took me inland to the dusty airport at Damascus.

Gertrude Hunt was waiting for me. I had radioed her from the flying boat.

"Hiya, Reg!" she greeted me enthusiastically.

I dropped my bags and took her by the elbows, lifting her up to my size. She kicked her feet, giggled, then kissed me on the lips. I put her down.

She gasped.

"Something else besides Damascus has been cooking!" she said. "Take it easy, will you, big boy?"

We went toward a taxi that waited by the gate to the field and I stacked my two bags and the typewriter into the front seat beside the native driver. Once inside, I turned serious.

"Look, Gert," I said. "I got your wire at Cairo. What's going on here?"

She lowered her voice. We were on The Street Called Straight, and headed for the center of the city.

"The British are due to get kicked out of Damascus on their little fannies," she whispered. "Now don't shout. I want it kept quiet."

I couldn't believe it. The Vichy French were licked. The Nazis were busy at Tunis and were due for more trouble when they retreated across the Mediterranean Sea.

"By whom?" I asked suspiciously. "Have you been drinking this stuff the Arabs hand out?"

The taxi stopped outside a two story, adobe hotel and we were busy getting my name on the register and my bags upstairs. Once in my room, Gertrude stretched out across the bed. I took out the typewriter, tuned it up with finger practice and wheeled around in my chair.

"All right," I said, "in ten minutes we'll eat. I'll foot the bill and you can eat your little self corpulent. Meanwhile, get rid of this dream you're dreaming. A young girl like you should be careful . . . And, by the way, corpulent means fat."

"Shut up, Reg," she said good naturedly, "the trouble with you is you can't see through the fat in your head to recognize a news break."

That humbled me a little and she went on.

"Did you ever hear of Queen Dido?"

"Dido?"

The name brought me forward in my chair.

Gert arose from the bed and drew the shades. She walked to the door, opened it and looked down the hall. Then she threw the bolt, came back, and sat down.

"THERE'S a small British garrison here," she said in a low voice. "By the end of the week the Arabs will destroy it. Then before the British can move in reinforcements, Damascus will be in the hands of the Arabs."

I didn't believe it. The Arabs were peaceful. They didn't want to fight.

"And Dido," I asked. "Where does the ancient queen of Carthage figure in?"

"You're going to think I'm nuts," she admitted. "I'll never be able to use this part of the story, but I *can* say the Arabs have risen against the British. That's good enough for me.

"I met a young Arab by the name of Rubal Khan out at the Tennis Club."

"Ah," I said, "the tall, dark man?"

"He fell for me hook, line and fez," she admitted. "I've been seeing him for a month. Last night he talked at great length about building a new country. It is to be a new retreat for Arabs and Arabs alone. I asked him just how

he was going about all this and he said his people would strike when the world was busy at greater problems. He said he had the support of a great tribe of people who would come from Southern Libya."

"Led by Dido?" I asked, half facetiously.

She nodded.

"It's a fairy tale, at least part of it," she admitted. "But the Arabs will make a lot of trouble. It will make good copy."

I was troubled by something that went deeper than the fear of another war with Arabia. I thought of the girl on the desert.

"I'm not so sure that *any* of it's a fairy tale," I said at length. "Perhaps some ancestor of this Dido dame really does live. Perhaps she has a lot of power hidden down there in the desert. No one knows much about that part of the country."

She wrinkled her nose and chuckled at me.

"Reg is going sensational again." She chided. "That's why you boys don't get the breaks. You're always dreaming up something that can't happen. You let the story escape you and go dreaming after impossibilities."

That was a challenge and I took it as such.

"I'll tell you something that can't be cabled," I said suddenly, "a story that you'll laugh at with every muscle in your pert little body."

"Oh, what a *pretty* compliment."

QUICKLY I told her about the girl who rode the flying horse, and how I had laughed at Captain Barth Rodman. Then I went on, giving her the details of my trip to Ghadames, the wounded girl warrior and her strange reference to Dido. When I had finished she was silent for a long time. She stood up, walked to the bed and sat down again. Lighting a cigarette, I passed it to her and took another for myself. A smile crossed her face.

"You say the girl on the horse kissed you?" she asked.

It made me mad. I couldn't resist tossing a hard one at her, and the minute I did it, I was sorry.

"Jealous?" I asked. "Yes, and I liked it. It's obvious that you don't believe a word I've told you."

Her face was suddenly solemn and she looked as though she was about to cry. She stood up again and walked to my side.

"Reg," she said softly, "you don't have enough imagination to dream up that story. I'm afraid I have to believe it, although it sure puts me and my appeal behind the eight ball."

I felt cheap then, and tried to kiss her. She backed away, teasing.

"Lips that have touched a warrior maid will never soil mine."

She walked swiftly to the door, pivoted and stood there staring at me.

"Look, Reg Johnson," she was deadly serious, "keep this under your hat. I tried to warn the British, but they just laughed at me. If you take your story to them they'll do the same thing." She hesitated, opened the door and added, "At least we're safe until the *khamsin* sweeps over Damascus. I hope the weather stays clear."

She went out and closed the door softly behind her.

Until the khamsin sweeps over Damascus.

That was on Wednesday. On Friday afternoon a hot wind came from Libya, caught up the desert sands of Egypt as it whirled onward and by night Damascus was full of biting dust. The moon was hidden and the wind rose in intensity until traffic was halted.

No one knew where the storm had started and strict commands to vacate the air grounded every R.A.F. plane. By Saturday morning the streets were deserted and the sky was a thick, black mass of whirling sand.

IT WAS about four when Gertrude Hunt pounded on my door as though she were trying to put a hole in the panel. I was trying to wash away some of the dirt the *khamsin* had showered over me that afternoon.

"Open up, Reg," she sounded excited and worried, "make it snappy."

I put on my bathrobe and went to the door. She came in with a worried scowl.

She sat on the edge of the bed, and I sat on a chair.

"What's up?"

"Plenty," she said shortly. "Remember those warrior women you told me about?"

"What are they up to now?" I kidded.

"They're over the city," Gert said abruptly. "They've been seen north of the main gate, and they are slaughtering the British troops."

"What?" I leaped to my feet. *"That can't be possible."*

Her voice grew impatient.

"Oh, it can't, can't it?" She was plenty angry. "Well, the Arabs took over three of the gates this afternoon. While you were wandering around the roof of the hotel watching the storm, your flying girl friends came down and bottled up all the British patrols outside the city. They killed off the few men they found and now Damascus and everything way down to the center of the Arabian Desert is once more in Arabian hands."

Gert wasn't fooling. I didn't know then just how completely the British had been routed. I learned from her that the stout old commander in Damascus was tossed into a pig pen and his finger and toe nails torn off gently by Arabian fighters. The Arabs seemed to have done the torturing. The women who rode from the air made all the quick strikes and bewildered the British troops. They had been killed in their barracks and in their tanks on the desert.

I dressed hastily, and Gert and I made a quick round of the city. The storm had cleared and tall, white-robed sons of the desert were on every corner. They didn't disturb us, but their tanned, inscrutable faces and long rifles were enough to tell me that our presence wouldn't be desirable in another few hours.

We tried the British Consul and found that everyone had been forcibly removed across the border. British headquarters was a mess of smashed furniture and bodies.

RUBAL KHAN came in as we watched bearded men carry away the papers of the British war office.

Kahn was a tall, slim man with a fez and a loosely fitted robe. His eyes were pitch black and he had a nose that hooked cruelly down to a thin, expressionless mouth. By desert standards he may have been handsome.

He gave a few orders then turned and saw Gert Hunt. His bow was low, but there was no doubting the expression of hatred on his face.

"The American, Miss Hunt." He swept gracefully across the room and took her hand. Bending over it he kissed it tenderly, and then his eyes bored into mine.

"Miss Hunt, you will introduce me to this *sahib?"*

My eyes never wavered from his, but I knew I was facing a tough baby. I wanted to smash his nose flat, but I de-

cided to bluff my way through. Stepping forward, I took his hand.

"Gregory Johnson, foreign correspondent for the New York *Mirror*." I said. "I hope your fight is with the British and that I remain neutral?"

He did not answer for the moment. Finally a faint smile crossed his face.

"You will wish to contact your paper?"

"This is important news." I admitted. "Will you let a cable go through?"

He smiled.

"But of course, *Sahib* Johnson." He bowed low. A little too low to please me. Gert was making frantic signals behind his back, but I ignored her.

"I take it that you are the leader of this uprising?" I said, digging for my notebook.

Khan leaned back against an overturned cabinet.

"You will be allowed to cable a full-length story," he said coolly. "You will wire that North Africa, extending west to the border of Algeria and including all of Libya, Egypt and Arabia is under the control of the Arabs. You will give full credit for this move to me, Rubal Khan."

I interrupted him.

"Not to mention a certain armed band of women who ride the *khamsin?*"

His face darkened.

"You have been reading fairy tales," he said quickly. "Many people who told such tales in Arabia have gone away without their ears."

My eyes dropped to the broad bladed sword at his waist and I grinned, although I didn't feel like it.

"I get it," I said. "I'll wire it the way you gave it to me, and tell nothing but the story you give me."

"When you have finished, I'll see that your story is dispatched," he said. "Meanwhile my men will stay with you."

THREE Arabs came in and stood behind me. I felt the bars of a prison closing in as he turned away. Gert was pleading with me silently.

"Wait," I protested. "Miss Hunt—we are together."

Khan turned and there was blank rage on his face.

"Miss Hunt *was* with you," he assured me in a steely voice. "What we want we take. She will be happier with me than she is with you."

I had no choice. If I tried to move, I'd be cut down on the spot. I watched him go out and saw one of the guards prod Gert gently in the back. She looked over her shoulder at me, flashing a wan smile.

"Looks like that Tennis Club date is washed up."

I nodded. She was trying to tell me that she thought Rubal Khan's headquarters were at the Club and that I should try to make it there.

"I have a pal out there," she said. "He sure keeps an eye on what's cooking."

While Khan's playboys stood over me with the urge to cut my windpipe, I wrote the cable in longhand. I told everything I dared to and wrote out instructions to send copies to the *Mirror*, the *Blade* and to Gert's outfit. As an afterthought, I added to each message: *"Expect no further message from here for sometime. The knives of war are sharpened and God knows where they'll fall."*

I knew that "Inkpot" Jameson would read between the lines and hoped that if he had any power to keep the knives from falling on my tender neck, he'd go to work at once.

After that I went to the cable office and turned the stuff in. My convoy was still with me. The Arab at the cable office was having trouble with the English equipment, but he took the mes-

sage, filed it under a pile of paper and nodded.

"*Sahib* will be taken care of."

They hustled me out to the street and into a car. I wondered just what Khan had told the boy at the cable office. Frankly, I figured Jameson would never see the story. Khan was either a damn fool or he felt himself powerful enough to fight the United Nations single-handed.

As the car picked up speed and rolled through the town, I remembered the fierceness of previous Arab wars and wondered if, perhaps, Khan wasn't smarter than even I had guessed. The desert men hated whites and would spit on them at the slightest provocation. They might be spitting for a long time now. The British were cleaned out. The Germans were keeping us busy to the west, along the Algerian coast.

WE REACHED a low, mud hut and I was dragged from the car. They went through my clothing quickly, took my press cards and ripped off my shirt. Inside the dark, stinking building I was tossed into a cell. No light came from outside and a single, barred window in the door let in more smell than it did light.

The guard was a fat, greasy merchant of Damascus. As he locked the door, he leaned close to the window and sent a blob of saliva shooting into my face.

"*Sahib* will be comfortable," he gloated. "Later, perhaps, we will improve his beauty by removing his ears."

I remembered the scarred, torn faces of British soldiers returning from the desert and was silent. He turned and shuffled away, disappointed that I hadn't busted into a tirade of abuse.

There had to be a way out. I knew that Khan intended to dispose of me later. His own pride had prompted him to permit my sending the cable. He would make love to Gert and if I knew the kid, she'd slap his face at the first pass. Khan was a tense, nerve-driven man. His temper would stand no stretching. When Gertrude died, I'd go with her.

I sat in the cell for an hour, wondering how the devil I could escape. I could not leave alone. Gertrude Hunt was true blue and to leave her here in this bandit's nest alone was unthinkable.

"Looks like the Tennis Club date is washed up," she had said. It wasn't, if I could prevent it. "I have a pal out there—knows what's cooking."

The fat jailer came with a plate. He pushed it under the cell door. I took the plate eagerly. My stomach had been shouting for food. He stood there, a wide, idiotic grin on his face. The plate was covered with uncooked, stinking intestines of a goat. I lost my temper. I threw the plate full in his face, against the bars. The man jumped back and the glass showered over him. He fell on his back and rose brushing the stuff from his face. I expected him to enter the cell then and there, and run a knife into my belly. I didn't care much.

"You stinking savage," I was close to the door, shaking the bars with my hands. "Do that again and I'll break every bone in your body."

He turned and went down the hall. I knew then that Khan was saving me for a bigger plan. The jailer had evidently been told that he could not have the honor of running me through.

The plate had shattered and bits of it were on the floor at my feet. For a while I was too bitter to do anything but walk the width of the cell, swearing bloody murder.

My foot hit a sliver of glass and I stooped down quickly. The floor was

covered with the stuff. Eagerly I found a long piece, broad where it had broken from the edge of the plate, and slivering down to the sharpness of a dagger. It was about eight inches long. I pushed it into my belt. I was grateful for that plate of garbage. It had given me a slim chance.

I THOUGHT the whole thing out carefully, waiting until I knew the jailer was worked up to a murderous pitch of hate. At last I went to the door and called to him.

"Hey, you son of a seventh son of a *pig*."

My voice carried down the length of the hall and I heard his stubby feet coming on the run. An Arab hates and fears the pig. He came into sight, knife unsheathed. The man was cunning. He stood well away from the bars, staring at me speechlessly. This fool American was asking for death. Begging for it.

"Come here, porky," I said in a low voice. "You look fat enough to turn out plenty of pork chops."

He started weaving toward the cell slowly, his knife in his hand. I knew he intended to use it this time. There is a limit to what he could take, I saw.

He was close to the door. I felt the long piece of heavy glass in my hand. Suddenly he lunged, throwing the full force of his body toward me. I dodged to one side and for a fraction of a minute, his arm came through the bars. I grabbed it tightly and held on.

A howl of fear escaped his mouth and he kicked the outside of the door, trying to release his arm. The glass dagger came up and reaching out I planted it in the soft part of his thick throat. He stopped kicking and sank down against the door. I held on with all the strength I had. Holding his arm, I saw the dagger slip from his limp fingers and clatter to the floor. I reached out as far as I could and tried to reach his pockets. I had seen him take his key ring from the right side of the dirty robe.

My fingers found the ring and drew it out. I released the arm and heard him hit the floor with a thud. The building was still silent. Khan had evidently hidden me well. He didn't care to be caught with an American prisoner on his hands.

The door opened easily and I stepped over the man on the floor. Pushing him inside, I retrieved the dagger, hid it in my boots and took off his robe. It was three sizes too large for me. I wrapped it around me quickly and went down toward the outer door.

I went outside and into a narrow, dark street. I wanted to run, but dared not try it.

I KNEW Damascus well. By keeping to the edge of the streets and grunting occasionally when I was spoken to, I managed to reach the outer gate. I passed through without being challenged by the three Arabs who guarded the place. They weren't expecting action as soon as this. In half an hour I reached the Tennis Club.

It was a low, well laid-out place. The British had made it the prize location for their games and drinks. Rubal Khan had chosen his headquarters well.

There were a lot of natives around the rear door and I saw they were offering heavy baskets of vegetables to the cook. I went toward the crowd and shouldered my way through them. It was now or never. As soon as my escape was noticed, no amount of bluffing would get me through. The cook was a slim, cadaverous individual who looked as though he had never tasted one of his own meals. I recognized him as the same one who had cooked for the club when the British were here. His expression of sadness and the rebuffs he

was handing out on all sides convinced me that the man might still be loyal. I did not think he was an Arab, although I couldn't be sure.

He stared at me for an instant, complete bewilderment on his face.

"You have nothing to offer," he said. "Get out before I throw you out. The others have already been told."

I drew several gold pieces from my pocket and held them carefully before me where he could see them.

"You are a friend of the American girl?"

An amazing change came over his face. He took my arm quickly and drew me inside. He closed the door in the face of the waiting crowd, leaned against the door and wiped his face with his apron.

"You shouldn't have come here, *Sahib.*"

"Miss Hunt expected me?"

He nodded.

"The Miss Hunt is locked in her room on the second floor. She told me you might escape and come for her. It is necessary that you stay well hidden until night."

He led me along a short hall, opened the door to a dark store room and I found myself inside. Footsteps came from the front of the building.

"Dogs, they are," the cook started sputtering outside. "They sell me dirty vegetables and rob the purses of my master."

He was evidently putting on an act. I heard the footsteps stop and a heated conversation between the strange voice and the cook. At last the cook sounded more humble and the steps went away. I sighed with relief. So far so good.

IN FIVE minutes he told me that he was sympathetic with the British and had plans ready for our escape.

"Miss Hunt was here early this morning," he said in a low voice. "I went to her room with food soon after she came. She told me about you. That pig, Rubal Khan will leave here tomorrow for Cairo. He plans to take her with him. If you hadn't come, she would have tried to find you in the city."

I felt a new warmth for Gertrude Hunt. She would have faced Damascus alone to find me.

"But the escape?" I was eager. "The place seems well guarded."

A smile crossed his thin face.

"I would poison the food of the men here with pleasure," he answered. "Fortunately, it isn't necessary *yet.* I am of more worth here where I can hear plans. I have located an airplane that will fly. Miss Hunt says you are a pilot."

"I can get them up," I admitted. "It is easy enough to come down, though perhaps I can't do it in the approved manner."

He shook my hand and backed out of the store room.

"I will tell Miss Hunt that you are here. Wait until you hear the clock in the kitchen strike nine. It will be dark. Go to the edge of the last tennis court. We will be there."

I wanted to thank him, but he was already out of the closet and whistling about the kitchen.

I waited for hours. The clock struck seven. Men seemed to come into the kitchen often and I got the impression that there was a lot of cooking to be done.

At last the clock struck nine.

I made sure my dagger was where I could reach it easily, opened the door cautiously and looked out. The room was deserted. I found the door through which I had come and stepped outside. There were several guards stationed about the place.

It was dark and I still wore the robe. I went slowly across the courts, pretending that I had no definite destination. The last court was well away from the building. The lights were blazing in the main dining room. I assumed that Rubal Khan was busy with a victory dinner. I waited for, perhaps, ten minutes, straining my eyes toward the lower doors of the building.

"Reg!" Gertrude Hunt's voice was close to my elbow. "Gee, but it's good to see you."

I WHEELED around and saw that the two Arab guards who approached, were not guards at all. Gert and the cook were swathed in white. She took my hand and squeezed it.

The cook led her past me. I heard his voice, low and filled with caution.

"Follow us at ten yards. You are watched."

I saw them drift away into the darkness, turned and walked in the direction they had taken. I could see several planes in the field some distance ahead. Some of them were wrecked beyond repair.

I caught up with them beside a broken-down British transport plane. The cook pushed me into the shadow of the machine.

"Get out of your robes," he said swiftly. "You have less chance of being seen."

I saw Gert slide out of her robe and followed her example quickly.

From the upper story of the hotel, a high-pitched cry of alarm went up.

"Quick, into the plane. They have discovered your escape."

Gert slipped into the forward seat. I took the cook's hand.

"You'd better come along."

"No," he drew away from me. "I am trusted here. I must get away from you before they see me."

He turned and was gone, a slim, white wraith in the night. I climbed in quickly and felt around for the controls. The plane would be cold.

Figures were rushing from the hotel. The guards were running around like wild men. A few shots were fired.

Now or never.

I gunned the engine and it started with a deep-throated roar. I felt the power go through me and felt safer. A group of guards broke away from the building and rushed across the tennis courts toward us.

"Give her the works, Reg," Gert turned in her seat, her worried eyes on me.

The instrument panel was strange to me, but I could guess most of it. I yanked on a lot of levers that looked vaguely familiar and we started moving. The night was clear and the field looked smooth. Shots zipped over my head and I felt lead tearing into the fabric of the wings.

"Here goes nothing," I shouted.

The engine roared wide open and we shot down the field. Before I knew exactly what happened, we were in the air. On the ground, the Tennis Club looked like a small, white birthday cake. Tiny figures ran around under us and flashes of gunfire popped into the sky.

"Where to, Miss Hunt?" I was trying to remain calm about the whole thing.

SHE had hitched herself around and was staring at me with solemn eyes.

"One place is as bad as another, Reg," she said. "They'll have planes after us in a minute. I think the desert is the best for our money."

"Then you believe my fairy tale now?" I asked. "Perhaps, we can get the flying horses to work for us for a while."

"It's worth trying," she shouted.

Two planes took off and as we floated ahead through the night, I could see them, two small streaks, gaining altitude on our tail.

"Can you use the gun?" I pointed toward the machine gun rigged up forward.

Her lips parted in a game smile.

"I can pull the trigger," she said. "When the ammunition runs out, we'll try walking."

I realized suddenly that there were no parachutes in the plane. It sent a chill through me that I couldn't control.

"It's a long way down," I pointed over the side at the vast, smooth sand bed under us. "Make your shots count."

The first pursuit plane was gaining rapidly. The second was directly behind, flying five hundred feet over my tail. The next three minutes would put them within firing range. I wondered vaguely why I had got Gertrude Hunt into this mess and thanked God for having a swell sport along when I really needed help.

A burst of tracer bullets tore at us from above. Looking back, I saw the highest plane cut down suddenly with its engine wide open. He had his gun on my tail and the little row of bullet holes crept steadily along the top of the plane.

I threw the stick over and we went down in a long, clean dive. The desert came up like lightning and the plane was still on my tail, pounding lead in a thin, deadly line not three feet above our heads.

I didn't dare let the plane dive too long. It was an antiquated model and might decide to rip apart at any minute.

We came out of the dive and shot skyward, up past the plane that was diving and into the clear night sky. No use trying to run for it. They were single passenger Hurricanes, a lot faster than the big bus I piloted.

I saw the second plane come up under my belly and knew his shots were ripping into the lower wing. Swinging around, we had him for a minute, directly in front of us.

I'm sure it was good luck and not Gert's marksmanship that sent a blast from our thirty caliber gun straight into the cockpit of the plane ahead. I saw the pilot slump over and Gert's thumb go up in a gesture of triumph. The Hurricane, piloted by one of Khan's Arab pilots, tipped over and started a slow, lazy spiral toward the desert.

THERE was a dense spot of clouds high above. I saw the other Hurricane climbing behind me, dived down to gain speed and then shot directly up into the cloud bank. Looking back I saw that he was still there, trying desperately to get over us. The clouds closed in. To throw him off, I turned directly back toward Damascus and stayed high. I knew if he followed, he'd think we were going in the opposite direction.

Things were a bit calmer now. I found the earphones and noticed Gert had donned hers.

"Looks like we settled the first one," I said. "If we can dodge the other . . ."

She turned and a sickly grin spread over her face.

"I—I killed him," her voice was low over the phone. "That's the first time I ever killed a man, Reg."

I grinned.

"Take your choice," I said. "It was him or us. I think it's safe to turn and head East now. We'll have to stop for gas."

"But where?"

I hadn't thought of that. Cairo, and

every point between here and Tunis would be swarming with Arabs. I thought of Captain Barth Rodman, still buried in the Lybian Desert. Frazer had advised that the Nazis had been beaten. I wondered if Rodman had evacuated Hell's Acre yet. It was worth a chance. We left the cloud bank and I saw no trace of the Hurricane.

"We'll try to make Captain Rodman's camp," I said to the head phone. "He's our only chance now."

She nodded and kept staring ahead into the vast loneliness of the night. I pitied Gertrude Hunt. I had, in a way, got her into this mess. Yet, God knows what might have happened to her if she had been alone in Damascus.

She understood now just how important the contact I had made with the flying warrior might be. There was no mistaking the importance of the flying horses, when the Arabs took control. They had struck on all sides, slaughtering the small outposts of British soldiers before they could imagine what had happened. Seemingly, the Arabs had the full support of the flying army, and yet I could not believe the girl I had seen on the road was a heartless killer. Another thing seemed to point to certain flaws in leadership of the flying horse band. In Hell's Acre, they had attacked both the German and the American troops. In fact, if I could rely on Frazer, it was the flying horses who destroyed the German camp there.

The mess gave me a headache. I hoped fervently that my cable had been released to New York.

THE hours reeled by with a sameness that nearly drove me mad. Gert slept fitfully, awakening to turn an anxious eye toward me. I knew we must be somewhere near the Ghadames. The sun had risen in a huge, burning ball of fire and the sand below sent up shimmering, dust-blown heat that I could feel in the plane. The sand was endless.

"I see something," Gert's voice came on the earphones. "Looks like a column of men."

She pointed a slim finger eastward, and I thought my own tired eyes could pick up a slight rise of dust.

Sure enough, in five minutes I could make out a line of soldiers marching northward out of the desert. Then the gas gauge of the plane started to flutter and bounce on the bottom. The engine sputtered and stopped. I gave the starter a few sharp jerks and it roared again, spit and stopped for the last time. The tanks were empty.

"Sit tight," I shouted. "I'll try to get us down the easy way."

I saw her grasp both sides of her seat. It was bumpy, and try as I might, I couldn't keep the machine in a straight glide. We were over the column of troops now and I still could not identify them. We drove downward and twice I had to swoop upward to cut the speed. The desert rolled up under the wheels and it suddenly looked rough and deeply scarred. I felt the wheels touch, bounce clear and we drove into the air again. Then we came down hard. The plane ripped across the sand, hit a ditch and nosed up with a sickening thud. My head hit the instrument panel and I blacked out.

The next face I saw was the homely, lovable phiz of Howard Frazer. He was bending over me, my head on his arm. He held a canteen close to my lips. My face was wet where he had poured water over it. He hadn't shaved in a week and there was a wide, dirty bandage across his forehead.

"Welcome home, Reg," he said quietly. "You must have been carrying a crystal ball to find us like this."

I tried to grin, but my face was so

badly cut up it hurt to move.

"Gert?" I asked. "Was she—she . . .?"

Frazer lifted me up until I could look around. Gert was stretched out in a small tent that had been thrown up hurriedly. Captain Rodman was kneeling beside her, washing the sand from her face.

"She's okay," Frazer assured me. "Flew clear of the plane and hit soft sand. Took the skin off her forehead and one arm. She's in one piece."

A wave of relief passed over me and I stretched out on my back.

"How in hell did you get here?"

Frazer grinned wryly.

"That's what I was going to ask you," he said. "Rodman got orders to come north to Tripoli. We're all finished up at Hell's Acre."

"Tripoli?" I remembered with sickening clarity that the Arabs were in Tripoli. In fact, they were along the entire coast line. "'You can't go to Tripoli. Rubal Khan and his men are there!"

Captain Rodman had left Gert's side and was walking toward us. He had on an extra heavy coat of desert dust, but was as tall and stern as always.

"Who the hell is Rubal Khan?" He took my hand and I stood up with difficulty. "Glad you made it, Johnson. I don't know how you picked us up out of all this sand."

I returned the greeting, and then as we retreated into the tent, I told them what had happened in Damascus. If I had exploded a load of T.N.T. under Frazer's bottom, it couldn't have affected him more.

"But I never even heard of Khan," he protested when I had finished. "He's probably some two-bit tribesman who is putting up a bluff."

Rodman was silent, waiting for us to finish.

"You weren't at Damascus," I said, "or you'd know just how powerful this attack was."

"These flying horsewomen," Rodman said at last. "We had a taste of them down at Hell's Acre."

I wanted to know about that.

"Well," Rodman said, "it was about three days after you pulled out. It had been quiet all night. Toward morning a storm came up. The *khamsin* came out of the mountains and some of the men went around telling stories about seeing more of the warrior girls. After what happened to you on the road to Ghadames, I couldn't call them liars.

"The *khamsin* swept over us and blotted out the whole valley. When it cleared, I sent a patrol out to see what damage it had done to the Nazi lines."

He paused, wiping gritty sweat from his face.

"Johnson, there wasn't a German soldier alive over there. The whole camp had been blown sky high. We found a couple dozen of those spears, bits of blown-up tanks and that was all."

WE WERE all silent after that. Frazer found a case of canned beans in one of the trucks and we drank water and ate beans. Rodman's men set up camp for the night. After a while I sat alone by the wrecked plane, trying to plan some sort of action. Gertrude Hunt came out of the tent and walked over to me and sat down.

"I want you to know I appreciate the rescue act, Reg," she said softly. "If it hadn't been for you . . ."

A shudder passed through her.

I turned and saw the raw, torn skin on her forehead, the compassionate look in her eyes.

I leaned over and kissed her on the lips. They were soft and she didn't

draw away. Just sat there looking at me as though I was a very important cog in her machinery of life.

"Don't do that again unless you mean it, Reg," she said. "We've only started this thing. I don't forget a kiss."

I was silent, looking across the desert and wondering what the next few days held for us all.

"Still plan to look for those warrior maids?" she asked suddenly.

"It's all pretty helpless," I admitted. "The Arabs will do a lot of fighting before they give up. With Egypt, Libya and Arabia up in arms, Hitler will have a breathing spell and 'Fat Chin' can get ready for us in Italy."

She was suddenly angry, her eyes looking fiercely into mine.

"If it hadn't been for those flying horses," she said bitterly, "it wouldn't have been possible."

"And yet," I reminded her, "Barth Rodman says the flying horses wiped out the German army down here. It doesn't make sense."

"War never does," she answered. "But—Reg—wait a minute."

"I'm waiting." I wondered if she was thinking of the same thing that had been troubling me.

"Suppose these flying horses would fight on either side. Suppose they don't know who to fight and that Rubal Khan was the first one to reach them. They may be fighting for a price."

I nodded.

"Exactly what I've been thinking for the past week," I admitted. "That's why I want to find them and try to tell them what they're doing to the world."

She stood up.

"What's holding us up?" she asked.

"Rodman," I admitted. "I don't know what he should do now, nor does he. We have about nine hundred Yankee soldiers here. They have supplies for a week, and they might as well be an army without a country. There are a million Arabs between here and the Yankee lines to the north."

THE sun was down and as we sat there, I heard a faint call over the dunes to the west. I stood up, listening, every nerve taut.

"Did you hear . . .?"

"Maybe a sentry," she answered.

"I think not," I said grimly. I could see them now, hundreds of horsemen, their robes flying in the wind as they swept across the sand a mile away.

"Get Rodman and tell him the Arabs are attacking!" I shouted. "I'll find a tank or some place where you'll be safe."

As I ran toward Frazer's tent, I saw a half-dozen tanks lumbering down upon us. They were British, medium weight type, evidently captured by Khan's men. Rodman's sentries were on the job now, and the cry of alarm went up.

The next twenty minutes were filled with plenty of action. We had three tanks left, a couple of anti-tank guns and plenty of small ammunition. Frazer came out in his underwear and slipped into his pants. We ran back toward the tanks. Rodman was with Gert, getting her into one of the huge American jobs as we came up.

"How many of them?" Rodman was panting, shouting orders in all directions and trying to get Gert to safety at the same time.

"I'd guess over three thousand," I said. "They'll circle in and pick off the men a few at a time. We'll have to keep under cover and in a close ring."

The first tank was a hundred yards out. A couple of Yanks behind me opened up with an anti-tank gun and it spattered shot against the oncoming

tank. A shell went over my head and splashed fire among the trucks.

Our men dug in as quickly as possible, but the attack had been unexpected.

The first sweep of Arab fighters came in, their voices shrill and murderous.

From hurriedly scooped out fox holes, and under the trucks, the Yank fire drove them back. A few fell from their horses, staining the sand with blood. A dozen Yanks had been shot with the long-barreled Arab rifles.

I found myself standing in plain sight before the trucks, firing like a crazy man. A hand grabbed me and drew me behind the supply truck. The Arabs came in again, firing hurriedly and withdrawing before we could organize.

Gertrude Hunt was in a tank with Frazer. Rodman went along the line, shouting at his men, encouraging them to fire and keep out of sight.

THE Arabs swept toward us five times, killing a couple dozen men on each raid. Their own ranks showed no hint of diminishing. There were too many of them. The night was clear now and every shot could be sent home with deadly accuracy.

Somewhere down the line a Browning went into action, spattering lead into the sand out beyond the trucks. The Arabs were smart. They stayed out of range and finally the firing stopped.

Rodman came to me.

"You're not in the army," he said in a worried voice, "but you've been with the desert fighters for years. You know as well as I what the chances are?"

I grinned, trying to reload the Garand he had pushed into my hands ten minutes before.

"With these kids you've got, we'll shoot ten men to their one," I said. "But with a ten to one average, we can't hold out until morning."

I pointed across the sand where the Arab band was getting steady replacement.

"We are the only Americans between here and the Tunis front. They don't intend to leave until they kill every last man."

He looked grim.

"If that's the way they want it. . . ." He turned away.

As I sat there behind the thin wall of sand that kept my neck intact, I felt a cold shiver go down my back. The wind had risen and far to the south I thought I made out a thin streak of black climbing into the sky.

The warrior maids were riding. At first I couldn't be sure, but as the wind increased, I knew the *khamsin* was coming. It arose in intensity and the desert was covered with flying sand.

Rodman's men noticed it and so did the Arabs. The white-robed men sat on the far hill, evidently assured that they need not attack again. Our doom was sealed.

Yet I wondered as I saw our men holding their places in the column just what manner of women these could be who would calmly wipe out honest soldiers and let the blood-sucking desert bands go free.

There was no time for dreaming. We drew our lines in tightly, placed the tanks where they could do the most good and waited with pounding hearts.

The first full force of the *khamsin* hit us and I could see no further than the end of the truck under which I had buried myself.

I saw a flash of white and knew the horses were swooping from the sky and down among our men.

Then I saw her.

FATE sent her to me before our small army was destroyed. She came out

of the flying sand and her horse landed on the desert not five feet from my hiding place.

She rode with a lazy grace that accented every line of her slim body. I scrambled from my hiding place and saw that she was riding away swiftly with raised spear.

"Wait!" The sand choked me and I fell.

I thought she was gone, but she had heard my voice and wheeled around.

"You!" Her voice was harsh. *"You are in the enemy camp?"*

I stood up quickly as she jumped from the horse and ran to me. The girl who had fallen and hurt herself on the road. Those same depthless eyes. The soft flesh that no desert storm could touch.

Her arm was on my shoulder and her fingers gripped tightly, as though she could not believe.

"But these are *not* the enemy!" I cried. "They are Americans, my own men!"

"But the *god-men* of the desert?" She pointed through the storm to where I knew the Arabs were waiting. *"They* are the all-powerful!"

It wasn't for me to judge then why she fought against us. I couldn't stand there, her eyes burning into mine, listening to the screams of my own men as they felt the thick spears of her army.

"You're a fool," I shouted into her face. "You destroy men who fight for the freedom of the world. You fight for the scavengers of the desert."

I thought she was going to strike me. Her eyes flashed fire and her hand withdrew from my shoulder quickly.

"*You* say that?" she asked.

I nodded.

"I didn't think a girl as lovely as you could murder in this way."

Her lips parted slightly and a smile brought dimples to her cheeks.

"I—lovely?"

"Yes," I answered savagely, "you're a beautiful, savage killer. If I didn't know you were killing my friends, I'd . . ."

She stepped close.

"On your word," she said softly, *"I am going against the command of our fate."*

Before I could stop her, she was once more on the bare back of her white horse. As I watched, a strange thing happened. She leaned back and a thin, high-pitched scream escaped her lips. It carried above the storm and echoed with the night wind. The *khamsin,* filled with the hurtling, flying bodies of her followers, seemed to hesitate and a hush came over the sands.

Her lips opened again and a series of commands that were gibberish to me escaped her mouth. As I stood there, wondering what death awaited me, the *khamsin* seemed to twist away from its course. It reeled back away from the line of Yankee soldiers and gathering speed, swept straight across the sand toward the Arabs. The girl was gone, and with her, thousands of her kind, riding the night straight toward the Arab army.

I felt a strange lump come up in my throat, and knew that my words had changed the fate of Bart Rodman's troops.

SOLDIERS came out from under trucks and Rodman found his way to my side.

For half an hour we watched the cloud of death that hung over the Arabs and listened to the screams of dying men. Then it cleared and the *khamsin* swung around toward the south.

We waited, knowing how complete the slaughter had been.

Fraser came from the tank and Ger-

trude Hunt walked over to where we were standing. There was nothing to be done. There wasn't a horseman in sight across the hill tops. Red-stained white robes were twisted and massed in ugly piles.

"I—I don't understand?" It was Gert's voice, taut and frightened.

Frazer's dark little eyes were on me. They glinted as I turned toward him and we understood each other.

"The same girl?" he asked.

I nodded, wondering how he had guessed.

"She must have a lot of power," he suggested.

I felt weak and let down. I was glad that we had been spared, but somehow events had been taking place much too fast during the past half hour.

"Wait a minute," Gert broke in. "What's the gag? You two know something?"

Frazer was staring straight over my shoulder toward the last whirling strands of the *khamsin.*

"Sit tight, sister," he said. "We're going to find out."

At the same time a little cry of fear escaped Gert's lips and Rodman jumped away from me as though I were a leper.

"Look out, Greg!" It was Frazer.

I pivoted and saw a half-dozen white horses bounding over the sand. They were bouncing into the air with every leap and seemed to cover forty feet with every move. The first horsewoman was almost upon us.

I knew why they had come. In some strange manner I was going to have to justify the part I had played in changing the tide of battle. I didn't try to escape. It was as though Fate were finally catching up with me.

I saw Rodman, Frazer and the awe-stricken face of Gertrude Hunt as they watched me. A strong arm swept around my waist and I was lifted into the air quickly. I felt my shoulder strike the softness of her body and knew the maiden of the *khamsin* had lifted me to her horse's back.

The dust swept in about us, blackening everything from sight. I was conscious only of the strong, white horse under us and the smiling, full-lipped face that stared down into mine. Then we were lost in the vortex of the storm and I could only hold on, hoping she had a firm grip on me. There was something awful about that flight into the center of the *khamsin.* Still, knowing she had done all this for me, I felt that I owed a debt in return. Where and how that debt would be paid, I could not guess.

FOR what seemed like hours I lay across the back of the horse, wondering at what moment I would slip and hurtle to death below. I couldn't guess how far we had come.

We rode swiftly, the girl with one hand grasping the mane of the flying horse and the other around my waist. I tried to see the expression on her face, but in the darkness it was impossible.

Then our speed diminished. The storm was clearing and the sky was almost clean of sand. I looked downward and saw jagged, chasm-cut hills. Green, dark valleys and high peaks lay below us like a relief map.

"You need not be frightened," she had evidently felt my body tense up as I looked downward. "You will be safe."

I looked back and saw the others following as the horse leaned its neck forward and dived toward the earth. Down we shot, faster than the wind. The valley sprang toward us and I saw the green spread out slowly and become clear outlines of brush and trees.

I had to open my mouth and breathed only with great difficulty. The pressure on my ears as we dropped downward was terrific. The horses descended between great cliffs and into a secluded valley. I could see a smooth field, roadways that criss-crossed the place and a number of low, tile-roofed buildings at one end of the valley. Then our steed hit the ground as lightly as thistledown and halted.

"We can walk now." The girl slipped from the horse and I dropped to the turf. I was terribly sick from the ride. "We must go at once to the *cavern.*"

We were alone, near one of the roads that lead across the valley. The other riders had dropped beside us and galloped away swiftly. I didn't know what to say. I wanted to thank her, to ask why I had been brought here.

"We are going to the outer chambers of the *cavern,*" she said abruptly. "You will remain there until you are summoned."

Now that we were once again on the ground and she stood before me I had a better opportunity to study the girl. I couldn't guess her age. I only knew that she was the most desirable thing I had ever seen. I felt a warmth of gratitude in my heart for the way she had spared us on the desert.

"What strange valley is this?" I asked. "I don't know what is expected of me here. I want you to know how much I appreciate . . ."

She smiled, squeezing my hand warmly.

"You need not worry. We must go to the chambers at once."

SHE whirled around and walked away toward the tiled buildings. As we approached, I tried to see everything through a cool, news-wise eye. I had been trained to put every scene in concise word lengths. Perhaps that is why I was so impressed by the one-story, colorful structures that grouped in a low line along the face of the gray cliff. They were surrounded by wide, grassy slopes and to my left, a number of the warrior maids splashed in the green waters of a mountain stream. I saw that we were in a valley with no visible outlet, and guessed that the stream came and went through underground passages.

The other horses had been taken away. The girl who led me, the fine Arabian steed that walked behind her, were masterpieces from an old print. Her body was lithe and smooth. The soft garment that clung to her legs, the brass breast plates, and the feathered helmet were all part of a startlingly fresh picture of youth.

Whatever strange qualities the horses might have, anyone would have been impressed by their appearance alone. Without doubt they came from a pure strain of ancient Arab. The girl's white horse was clean-limbed and held its head proudly. At every step, it pranced and lifted its hooves like the king that it was.

We crossed the lawns and an attendant took the horse away to the stables along the cliff. The girl led me through a small door and into the coolness of the chambers. The room was small, spotless. Walls were hung with bright draperies and a tiny fireplace sent out the warm heat of charcoal.

"You will bathe in the stream and await the pleasure of Queen Dido." She turned quickly and left the room.

I should have felt proud of myself, because I was evidently making an impression on this lovely creature. Instead I felt like hell. Gertrude Hunt had my heart strings tied up tighter than I liked to admit. After what the warrior maids had done for us, I knew

I owed a debt. I hoped fervently that I would be able to pay it in full and still return to Gert and Howard Frazer out there on the desert.

The stream was deserted when I bathed. The water was cold and fresh and I felt better when I returned to the chamber. Shaving was out of the question so I sat with my back to the outer wall, letting the warm sun pour down over me.

I dozed for a while, and the thought of Queen Dido went flashing through my head.

Queen Dido, so history said, was an attractive woman. No one could guess how attractive, but she had founded the city of Carthage, and she had drawn there men and women who made it the richest trading center of the world. She must have been powerful both in physical attractions and powers of recourse. To believe that she was alive, and I was to see her in the valley, was hard to swallow. Yet, after the flying horses, nothing could surprise me now. "Inkpot" Jameson, facing the everyday facts of the editorial desk, would certainly put a black mark down for me if he knew my present trend of thought.

"The queen is awaiting your coming."

I JUMPED, awakened fully and felt the glare of the sun in my face as I stood up. A tall, supple girl was before me. She had approached silently and her face was stern and unsmiling.

"Thanks." I didn't know what else to say.

"You will follow me to the *cavern.*" She turned and crossed the grass swiftly, entering one of the doors that lined the colored tile.

I stumbled after her only half awake, brushing my hair back from my face to present a half-way decent appearance. The room we entered was very dark after the sun outside. We crossed it quickly and she pulled hard on a long cord that hung from the ceiling. The wall slipped away. Beyond us, going directly into the face of the cliff, was a wide, blue-rocked tunnel.

I went along it, wondering at the pale, precious glow that radiated from the wall. The tunnel widened suddenly and I stopped short.

We were in the *cavern.* It was a huge round-ceilinged cave, all of it glowing a faint, luminous blue. A circle of stone steps led downward into the center and on these steps sat the warrior maids. They were dressed in simple, ankle-length white robes. An entire army of perhaps two thousand women, a solid circle of white, topped with the gold and chestnut of luxurious hair. They faced the center of the *cavern,* and my eyes followed until they focused on the queen to which they were so attentive.

"What the devil?"

My own voice was suddenly loud and hollow and the exclamation had emerged before I could stop it. Small wonder. Seated on her blue stone throne, a simple chairlike thing carved from solid rock, was the girl who had brought me to the valley.

No wonder she had been able to turn the tide of battle. I had ridden here with the *queen* of the warrior maids.

It's hard to say whether I was frightened or extremely happy about the whole thing. I was terrifically impressed, as though I had interviewed a woman who, after my story was written, turned out to be the most important person on earth.

I stood there for a full minute, mouth open foolishly. I couldn't take my eyes from the slim figure on the throne. She wore a long, white robe covered with tiny gold clips. Her

head was crowned with a gold ringlet that reminded me of a halo and from its sides soft white wings spread above her hair.

I felt a nudge in my back, and stumbled down the steps between the warrior maids. I went toward her, trying to get the words out of my throat that were sticking there so tightly.

She motioned me closer and I stood below her. A small flurry of movement came from her audience and I knew that in placing myself below her feet, I had favorably impressed her court.

"I find the queen a complete surprise." I was trying to say something nice. "In fact, I find that she is as attractive as I had hoped she would be."

IF YOU'VE ever faced a couple of thousand good-looking women and tried to pass out the right kind of compliments without hurting anyone's feelings, you know how I felt. The queen stood up and I knew the warm, radiant smile she gave me was in complete approval.

"I am sorry I could not tell you before." She hesitated and the smile played over her face. "I had to be sure that you knew nothing of my power when you asked for my help."

"I'll be grateful forever for what you did." I thought of Frazer, Gert and Rodman's men all alive because she had listened to me. "I'll try to repay . . ."

She held her hand up to silence me.

"There will be no payment," she assured me. "Only, in respect to those I lead, I must ask for a complete explanation."

I didn't know where to start. I had no idea how she felt toward the present world, how she had come here or what she expected to accomplish. I said as much in a few words, and summed up the whole situation.

"First I must know why you came here and why you fought with the Arab leader, Rubal Khan. He is our enemy."

An angry murmur rose from the warriors who surrounded me. I knew that I had said the wrong thing. Queen Dido, however, ignored them.

"When the city of Carthage fell," she started, "the women who fought with their men were sent across the desert to retreat before the Romans came. They were under my leadership. A storm came up suddenly . . ."

"Khamsin?" I asked.

She nodded.

"The entire army of women were buried deep in the desert. Before we were lost there, the goddess of the *khamsin* appeared before us. She was an old old woman but she was not harsh with us. She gave us a promise."

" 'You will not die,' she said, 'for you have committed no crime. This world will be man's world of blood for many centuries. In coming ages you will arise and with you will go two blessings. You will ride high in the *khamsin* and fight against the destroyers of the world. You will ride a pure strain of stallion. When the *khamsin* lifts the sand from you, go and find the horses that will help you fly above the storm.' "

I stood very still, trying to absorb the full meaning of her story.

"There is little more," she went on. "The goddess of the *khamsin* also said, 'You will be rewarded for your fight against the dictators. When you have at last freed the little people of the world, the *khamsin* will again come and sweep you back to the Carthage of your time. There you will live with peace as your watchword and no man will question your rule, though it be for countless ages.' "

QUEEN DIDO sat down quickly, as though very tired. There was a sadness etched on her face that I did not understand.

"But why did you fight with Khan?" I asked. "You fought against us and for us at once. I do not understand."

"We did our best," she said simply. "We could not understand the world with its changes. The dark man, Khan, came here in his winged bird. We thought he was a god, come to give instructions. We are yet unable to decide whether he or you are correct. We will hear your story."

That was a large order. Perhaps I was fortunate in having chosen a profession that schooled me in history. I spoke for a long time, sometimes looking across the audience of eager warriors, sometimes staring straight into the deep, understanding eyes of the queen above me. I knew in my heart that she did not question my honesty. I was in fact, speaking for her, to convince her followers.

I tried to remember what ancient history told of the world after Carthage and I traced the lives of man down through the ages. At last I told of the paper-hanger, Hitler and his pig-faced follower, "Fat Chin" of Rome. I outlined the present war in Africa and explained what they had done against our cause in putting Rubal Khan in power.

"It will take a long time to throw Khan out," I ended. "During that time Hitler will go on killing babies and Khan will be his best student."

I saw a shudder pass through her and knew from the dead silence that followed that I had spoken well.

"Then we have been moving away from our goal, instead in toward it," she said sadly. "I think we are agreed that you tell a simple, untarnished truth."

Around me, to the delight of Queen Dido I was sure, a low murmur of assent arose. For the first time in my life, I felt as though I had done something toward killing the hateful beast of dictatorship. It was a deep, wonderful feeling. Only a newsman, fighting day after day to get the truth to his people, could understand the thrill that passed through me.

Queen Dido left her throne and walked slowly down toward me. She took both my hands in her own and I was ashamed of the rough, blistered skin that rubbed the smoothness of her tiny fingers.

"You have done us a great service," she said. "We can only ask that you lead us against these enemies of the world. You are better fitted to know them than I, a woman long away from the world."

I KNEW when I left the *Cavern* that I would do as she asked. There was a power in the touch of her fingers, something about the sincere admiration in her eyes that flattered every atom in my body. Rubal Khan would come here soon and demand an explanation from his unfaithful allies. Khan had learned by now that his army of Arabs had been attacked and destroyed. He wasn't a man to be toyed with. When he came to the valley there would be power with him to destroy. Just how the warrior maids would fight I did not know. I wanted to learn and learn quickly every trick they employed. Dido taught me.

In the days that followed, she was again the simple warrior. Never once did she order her fighters to do a thing that she would avoid. I saw that her tenderness and loyalty to each of them was a wonderful thing. They followed her about constantly, taking care of her every need.

Because she had accepted me, I was also all powerful. With her help I learned about the explosive tips of the spears, a secret left her by the goddess of the *khamsin* winds. I rode a flying horse and knew how to guide him with a touch of the knee. At first, to rise above the earth frightened me. When I realized the full power of the steed under me, I learned to delight in the strong, heady feeling that flight gave me.

Yet that uneasiness in me did not change. I wondered if Rodman had led his troops into the Tunis territory and if Gertrude Hunt was safe. Daily I went into the clouds above the valley and watched for the coming of Rubal Khan.

Then one morning when I arose, the air was filled with the *khamsin*. I went to the grassy slopes before the queen's quarters and waited until she appeared. The valley was already black with the dust and the wind howled from the hills.

"Do we ride out in this storm?" I asked.

She smiled.

"The *khamsin* has come to protect us. Some power approaches and the goddess of the *khamsin* has sent it to us."

We waited, and in ten minutes I heard the hum of planes in the air overhead.

"It is the man, Khan," she said. "He thought to destroy us."

By the stables a dozen horses had been brought out and were bucking impatiently. Warrior maids came from their quarters, mounted and swept into the sky.

"We will wait," Queen Dido said. "They will return soon."

I HEARD the planes circle the valley, but they could see nothing through the black, twisting dust. Finally they sounded fainter and died away to the north. One plane remained. I waited, trying to tell from the queen's expression what would happen. Suddenly the roar of the bomber grew louder. It must be almost over our heads. It dived and the motors howled a protest as they cut through the flying dust. I waited for the pilot to pull up and avoid a crash. He didn't. The sound grew to a shrill scream of hurtling metal and the plane crashed somewhere below us in the forests.

When the warrior maids returned, they carried Rubal Khan with them. He was unhurt and furiously angry. They brought him to us across the grass and he stood in front of me, his face a hateful mask. He was as handsome as he had been when I saw him in Damascus. Kahn had a powerful, sunburned face that was handsome and dreadful at the same time. He spat angrily.

"I thought an infidel dog was at the bottom of this." Whirling to Queen Dido he shouted. "You promised to help me. You have destroyed my men and turned like an ungrateful wretch upon my country."

Taken aback by the suddenness of his onslaught, the queen hesitated.

Before she could answer, Khan had whipped an automatic from under his leather tunic. He was perhaps three feet away from me as the gun flew up and aimed straight at the girl's heart. I'm not sure what happened then. I knew that Dido didn't know the death she was facing. I couldn't lunge out quickly enough, so I kicked his wrist with every ounce of strength in me.

The gun flew through the air and hit the turf. While I was still off balance, he tackled me and we went to the ground. The warriors who had brought

him stood in a circle about us. They made no attempt to interfere and Dido stood very still, a puzzled expression on her face.

Khan had the advantage of the first attack and I found myself under him. What he could accomplish by this fight I didn't understand. He had thoroughly lost his temper and was a raging animal. He pounded a heavy fist into my face and I tasted blood. Rolling quickly with all my strength I managed to throw him from me. The circle broke as he rolled over and over on the ground.

Too late I saw that he had reached his automatic and was on his knees, pointing it at my head. I ducked quickly as he fired and went in low. When I hit him, it was like a ton of bricks tossed at a wall. Khan sank back with a groan and I was so darned mad I could have killed him then and there. I sat astride him, pounding my fists into his rotten, black face until it was nothing but a bloody pulp. He tried to fight, but his arms fell at his side and after that I didn't have the heart to finish him.

I STOOD up and turned toward the group of warriors. Then I knew they had seen the power of the automatic. One of the girls led a white stallion to the queen. A dark, bloody bullet hole was in its flank. Khan's bullet had gone wild and hit the horse. It stood there, still powerful and a king of his breed.

"You saved me from *his* fate." The queen walked to me and before her court, threw her arms about me. On tip-toes she tipped her face upward and pressed her lips to mine. The warmth of her swept through me and I wanted to hold her tightly. Instead, I stood very still until she released her hold and stepped away.

"Throw the Arab on the wounded horse," her voice was sharp and angry.

Quickly they tossed the wounded, sullen Rubal Khan on the back of the stallion. The horse knew its mission well and the look of gratitude in its eyes was wonderful to see. I knew then that even a horse can take revenge and be happy. The stallion leaped into the teeth of the *khamsin* and flew upward into the darkness. As it arose the storm departed with it and swept south toward the unmapped country of dark Africa.

I knew I would never see Rubal Khan again and that no paper could ever carry the true story of the Arab chieftain's disappearance. Perhaps he was destined for torture in another world—another land where we could not go—ancient Carthage.

WITH the death of Rubal Khan, I grew more lonely for my own people. A month had passed and I was at home in the *khamsin*. At first I was puzzled because the storm did not harm my body. I had expected to be cut apart by the stinging sand.

The queen explained this to me one night as we sat under the soft moonlight by the stream.

"The powers the goddess of the *khamsin* gave us are many," she said. "Why do you think we bathe our bodies in the stream?"

I wanted to say, "To keep you as fresh and lovely as you are." In spite of our close bond, I dared not. I did not reply.

"Because," she went on, "the water protects us from the storm. Our skin is untouched by the *khamsin* and our eyes are left clear to fight for the good people of the world."

I thought of "blind justice" and smiled.

"That stream would be a fine thing for everyone to bathe in," I said.

"It might wash away a lot of the meanness and filth of men."

I came closer to falling in love with Dido that night than I ever had before. The valley was a magic scene of moonlight and subdued color. I wanted so badly to stay with her always and protect her from men like Khan. I knew inside me that she was more powerful than I could ever be. She, a girl who had kept youth over the centuries, was older than time. A powerful ruling queen who some day would return to a world of her own.

In spite of this, she was lonely. I could not put up a wall against that loneliness.

We spent hours alone and I was human enough that her love for me forced me into returning her caress and holding her in my arms.

I did not feel equal to her. With Gert it had been a warm, human friendship. Queen Dido dwelled in a world away from me and to press my lips to her firm mouth was a privilege. A feeling of worship for a queen who was immortal arose within me and I longed to get back to the worry and war action of my own place in the world.

ON THE second day of the second month, the strong *khamsin* came to the hidden valley. It had been like this always. The warrior maids were prepared for battle, but they could not move from their valley prison until the goddess of *khamsin* sent her storms to carry them across the desert.

In the early morning I saw Queen Dido and talked with her near the *cavern.* I knew as she stood before me, her eyes worried and stormy, that destiny would split the thread of our lives and send us apart. The storm had arisen and was tearing through the valley and up over the rim of the cliffs toward the desert.

"I've tried to reason it out," I said. "I know we cannot live together. You are a queen whose destiny is in a far off land. I'm a man of the present."

"For many days I have forgotten that I am a queen," she said softly. *"Now it is very hard to remember anything but our being together."*

I felt a lot like that. I was tempted to sock destiny in the nose and make wild promises. That's the way of a man when woman's spell is upon him. Instead, I held her gently at arm's length.

"The army of Khan will be unruled and ripe for conquest," I said quickly. "If we fly against Tripoli we can strike them to the heart. After that my people will come and finish the battle."

A smile fluttered her lips and she dried her eyes quickly.

"My followers will doubt my ability if I show such weakness."

She was again a queen, and as she threw the softness from her heart, I thought that I had been right. We were not destined to stay together. The goddess of the *khamsin,* potent and ever-present, had seen to that. I had one duty now. I must see that this troop of lost women would have a chance to redeem themselves in the eyes of the past and return to their own time, conquerors under the wise hand of a powerful queen.

THE warrior maids of Libya were astride their stallions and anxious to ride. They were drawn up in formation across the wind-swept lawns before the *cavern.* Fate had placed me beside their beautiful queen, and I was proud of our mission. Not once did it occur to me to draw comparisons between my life of a month

ago and today. Then I was a man, crawling through the desert with a defeated army. Now, for a few hours, I was a flying king, helping to lead a cause that was good.

We left the valley, riding wildly in the heat of the *khamsin*. We swept upward into the blanket of dust and driving my heels into the solid, snorting stallion, I swept ahead with the queen, straight across the sandy wastes toward the seaport of Tripoli.

We passed over Ghadames and I knew that already the Arabs could feel the coming of the *khamsin* and were afraid.

Dido rode close to me, sometimes letting her hand touch mine as we swept ahead through the storm.

"Your friends of the desert troop," she shouted, "will be at Tripoli?"

I remembered Frazer and Gertrude Hunt with a sudden hurt in my heart.

"They had to fight the Arabs all the way north," I answered. "I hope they are safe."

She was silent for a while.

"You thought much of the girl with the troops?"

I hated to hurt her now. Our remaining hours were to be few. I did think a great deal of Gertrude Hunt, although I had never completely classified that feeling.

"She's an old friend of mine," I sid. "We've worked a lot together."

Dido smiled.

"More than a friend," she answered. "I think she is the one who will be your queen."

She startled me. I didn't realize that she was so aware of Gertrude. The girl queen who rode at my side was wiser than I had thought. I said nothing, not daring to pursue the subject further.

"I would gladly exchange my entire kingdom to take her place."

I still could not answer. We were already near the sea and I knew that soon we would sweep down on a helpless people and destroy them as they deserved to die. I wanted to comfort her, and was miserable to think that I, a man made god for a day, was helpless.

"If we become parted in battle," I said at last, "always remember that if I could fight destiny, I would go anywhere you wished me to go. I owe you more than I can ever repay."

"You would go—even to Carthage?"

"Even to Carthage," I said, "if that would make you happy."

TRIPOLI was beneath us.

The *khamsin* swept down over the colorful roofs of the sun-baked town and filled the streets with its fury. Into the heart of it rode the warrior maids, their murderous spears slaughtering the enemy. I saw great battalions of men drawn up with full fighting array, mowed down before us as though a storm of fire had hit them.

Dido was always by my side, and we followed the long avenues of the city, taking every armed column in its turn.

The *khamsin* continued to rage throughout the day and late into the night. Every street was strewn with dead and there was much that was holy about the clean-limbed, handsome women who rode above all this like living angels of mercy, destroying a diseased nation.

Then the fighting was over and I was thinking of Gertrude Hunt. I confess she had been increasingly in my mind since I had talked with Dido.

I knew that American troops were stationed outside Tripoli and that after the storm they would come here. I wanted to go to them now and find out what I could about Captain Barth

Rodman and his men. He would know what had become of my friends.

I didn't dare speak of this, but as the storm withdrew from the city and we followed its path, Dido rode close once more.

"You need not return with us," she said. "Your destiny is here."

I was puzzled at what my next move, my next words would be.

"I wanted to find the troop of men I left on the desert," I admitted.

"They will know where you can find the girl?"

I blushed.

"I guess that is right. I promise to return with you as I said I would, but I want to make sure she is safe."

We passed the outer gates to the city.

Not once after that did the queen speak to me. We rode straight toward the lost valley and as the *khamsin* left, we were there again before the door to the blue *cavern,* our task completed, our mission done.

IN SPITE of our success a strange sadness seemed to hover over the valley. The warriors passed me quickly as they retired to their quarters and Queen Dido left without further words, seeking the depths of the *cavern.*

I wandered around like a lost man. The stream was cool and I bathed carefully, trying to wash away the ever stronger thoughts of Gertrude and the way I had left her on the desert. I trusted Howard Frazer and knew he would die himself before he'd let any harm come to her.

Several hours passed and I saw no one about. I went across the lawns and down the valley. The sun had gone long ago and the night was cold. I wanted to go to Dido and beg her on bended knee to forgive me. She knew that Gertrude and I were bound together by earthly ties and that she, a queen of the past, could never live happily with an earth man.

I went to the room that had been my home and saw that a fire had been lighted in the fireplace. Food was on the floor and I sat on the rug and ate some of it. I tried to sleep, but toward midnight I was startled by the sudden appearance of a warrior maid. She stood at the door, clothed in the robe of the *cavern.* Her face was calm and expressionless. Her lips moved as though she were in a deep hypnosis.

"The queen will see you."

I followed her down the tunnel I knew so well by now and my heart was heavy when I approached the throne. There was a lead weight inside me that refused to lift from my spirits as I faced Dido across the chamber.

"I had hoped to linger longer here," Dido spoke to me from the throne and her voice was sad and hollow with heartbreak. "You have done your job so well that you have liberated us. We return to our own time."

I went to the throne, and kneeling before her, waited for her command.

I felt her hand in mine as she descended and stood before me.

I remained waiting, I knew not what for.

The room was suddenly cold. The sand on the floor wafted upward and a wind arose from nowhere.

"The goddess of the khamsin."

Dido's words were filled with awe.

I TRIED to look about, but no longer could I face the sand with open eyes. The wind howled louder and through it I heard her voice, strong once more and triumphant.

"The mission has been successful.

We return now to our world. Some day, if you wish to follow, find the valley of the khamsin and wait for me."

The force of the wind tore us apart and the *cavern* was a vast, hollow mixing bowl of sand. The *khamsin* threw me on my face and I lay still, trying to catch my breath. For God knows how long, I lay there.

When the whirlwind stopped, I sat up, trying to dig the sand from my skin. My eyes stung and ached, but gradually I could see once more.

The *cavern* was no longer alive with warriors. Its blue, shining walls were pitted and dusty. The floor was deep in yellow, unmarked sand as though the desert had swept in and retaken its lost heritage.

I looked for the throne and found only a faint outline of it under the dust of ages.

Outside it was the same. The valley was a vast pit of the desert. Trees, the stream, even the stables and living quarters were torn apart and scoured to a colorless white by the force of the last *khamsin.*

Waiting for me by the room where I had lived was the magic horse of Queen Dido. She had left me an escape. I went to the lonely stallion and wrapped my long fingers in the coarse hair of its neck. It turned friendly understanding eyes toward me and licked a red tongue across my face.

PERHAPS fiction would dictate a wonderful end for this story. Perhaps I should have swept into the sky on the horse's broad back, found Gertrude Hunt waiting for me in Cairo and kissed her into a happy ending. That would have satisfied everybody.

Unfortunately, life is not like that. I found that with the going of Dido, the flying horse had become only a fine Arabian horse. It no longer flew into the sky on a shaft of light, but plodded exhaustedly into Ghadames, a half-dead man clinging to its back.

I returned to Tripoli, found Barth Rodman and through him, learned that Howard Frazer had married Gert and returned to New York. The *Mirrror* and my boss, Jameson, heard Frazer's story and gave me up for dead. A new man represented the *Mirror* in Tripoli.

Captain Rodman was kind enough. He told me that Gertrude was broken up about my loss, but Frazer had treated her kindly and they were married in Tripoli. They had just taken a boat home.

"Tunis is taken," he said. "Thanks to you we'll have no more trouble in Africa. How about coming with me to Italy? We invade it next. Plenty of action and stories."

I muttered something about having business somewhere else, and stumbled out into the street. The horse was waiting patiently for me and I climbed wearily on its back.

I don't know what will happen when I finish this script and head south toward the desert valley. Perhaps, with a month's supply of food, they'll find my body in the foothills where the horse finds itself too weak to go further. I have but one path from here on. They don't need me up north. I did my part with the help of of Queen Dido.

"Someday, if you wish to come, find the valley of the khamsin and wait for me."

I'll try very hard to wait. I only hope that the goddess of the *khamsin* is kind and that she will, when she is ready, take me to an ancient city called Carthage and leave me with the woman who hoped my destiny and my happiness was with her.



TRICK WITH A BRICK

By ELROY ARNO

Just how gullible are human beings? Gabriel and Satan had different ideas so they decided to find out

HALFWAY HOUSE, a large Inn located on that uncertain highway that souls travel when bound for the last goal, hadn't seen such a large company of guests for some time. The reason was evident. A number of souls, themselves wondering which fork of the road to take beyond the Inn, were waiting for Gabriel and Satan to choose up sides.

Those gentlemen sat in person, feet pushed under the finest banquet table in the hall, enjoying one of their customary arguments. Gabriel had just put a fine vegetable dinner under the ample folds of his stomach and Satan was washing down the last bite of bloody steak with a gulp of cold wine.

"And *I* say that people are getting more wordly-wise than ever before," Satan's fist crashed down on the table and his eyes flashed. "They realize when they are doing wrong, but the pleasure is so satisfying that they



"Would you be interested in obtaining a tidy nest-egg?"

don't worry about the punishment."

Gabriel, always in possession of his temper, but closest to losing it when faced with this hot-tempered fool, grumbled something under his breath and speared a last carrot.

"And *I* say that people are essentially good, and always have been. True, they get off the track once in a while, but it's mostly because you lead them. If you keep your nose out of things . . ."

"Enough," Satan roared. He sprang to his feet, the chair clattering to the floor behind him. "As the present generation has it, Gabriel, you'll have to put up or shut up."

"By that you mean?" Gabriel asked.

Satan stormed up and down the low-beamed room, arms behind him, tail lashing furiously.

"Let's tempt these nice little people of yours. You remember the old days when they used to sell gold bricks to suckers? Well, we'll get a gold brick. If you can sell it easily, you'll prove that people are easily led. If not, I win my point. I say that people are smart, commit small and large crimes with full knowledge of what they are doing, and enjoy every moment of them."

"But a trip to Earth at present . . ." Gabriel protested. "I'll have to sort out my flock, see them home and make arrangements . . ."

"Enough!" Satan howled. "I have challenged you. Go home. Take a brick from your precious golden street and meet me in New York in one month."

Gabriel considered carefully, and a soft smile freshened his cheeks.

"Good," he said. "It is done. If I can't sell a brick from the street of heaven, I'll have to admit people are not easily led."

Satan regarded him with pity.

"I'd suggest a more suitable dress for New York," he said. "Those robes and that fat belly! Gad, you oughta wear a girdle."

This started them on an entirely different subject that provided fuel for the remainder of the quarrel. Satan left Halfway House with a new band of sinners. He was happy. A golden brick from the main street of Heaven. What a prize. All details he had carefully thought out. The trophy was indeed a precious one, and worth much trouble to acquire.

* * *

A SMALL, very fat man with round, smiling face and deep blue eyes stood on the corner of a downtown street in greater New York. Under his arm he held a small, oblong package done up carefully with newspaper and old string. The little chap was waiting for someone. His eyes lit up shortly as he made out a slim, mustached individual rushing toward him out of traffic. The new arrival was done neatly in black, with tall silk hat and eyes that held a startling amount of sly hatred in their depths.

"Well," the tall one said. "I see you made it. That's the real thing, I take it, tucked under your arm?"

Gabriel, for the fat man was he, smiled broadly.

"Pure and heavy," he admitted. "I'll have no trouble peddling this to some lucky customer."

Satan snickered.

"We'll see," he said.

Then, staring at Gabriel's somewhat smaller waistline, he grinned wickedly.

"You know what I think, Gab?" he asked. "I think *you're* the one that's being led. I actually believe you're wearing that girdle."

Gabriel's face turned a brilliant peach color, then faded.

"I don't travel often," he said abruptly. "To look his best is any man's

privilege in this free world."

THE bum in the ragged clothes was suspicious right from the first. To begin with he didn't have ten bucks to his name. All he owned were the clothes that covered his somewhat shaky frame and two ham sandwiches which he had just collected from a housewife.

He faced the two well dressed guys with confidence born of long hardship.

"I ain't interested in no gold brick."

The smaller of the pair smiled at him with that father-toward-son beam of hospitality.

"But, this is a *real* gold brick. Solid and worth its weight in—well—in gold."

The man with the sandwiches was hungry. He had been looking for a place to sit down. He ran a dirty finger under his nose, sniffled and tried to get around the two who faced him.

"Nuts," he said with a snarl. "That gold brick racket came in with the Brooklyn Bridge. I ain't buying neither one of them."

The smile faded from Gabriel's face, but Satan looked perfectly contented.

"But," Gabriel cried, "I'm not an impostor, sir. I offer you . . ."

He never had a chance to finish. The bum made a sudden dash around right end and was swallowed up in the crowd. Gabriel wiped his face with a silk handkerchief and puffed a little from the heat of the morning.

"That was only the first one," he said confidently. "I think he will end up where he belongs anyhow. I couldn't stand the smell of him in my place."

BUT the first, or the tenth. They were all alike. Prospect number two had a wife at home waiting for his pay check. He didn't intend to get the check home, but he was saving part of it to drown his sorrows before facing the wife. He gave Gabriel a going-over with two sharp eyes, ended Gabriel's sales talk with a husky—"Oh yeah!" and sent him tumbling into a gutter. Satan, noting the prospect's husky right arm, had stayed in the background.

Gabriel picked himself up carefully, brushed some of the mud and slime from his pants and stood with his hands on his hips watching the second no sale customer leave.

"Well I'll be," he said slowly, then noticing Satan's eyes on him, added, "hanged . . ."

Satan came to his side.

"Had enough?"

Gabriel's chin shot out.

"Not by a bomb-sight," he said. "Let's move on."

"My suggestion exactly, Bub," a voice said from behind him. Turning, they saw a large and very unfriendly cop, staring with suspicious eyes at the gold brick still clutched in Gabriel's fist.

THE newly-weds didn't want any. Not even a share. Sure Bud needed dough, and Sarah was a pretty little thing who intended to make both ends meet by cutting the budget in the middle. But, without any doubt, they didn't want any.

Gabriel met them in the park, sitting by themselves on a quiet bench. He approached them with a new-born confidence in himself. These were young, innocent kids. Surely they would be led easily? He sat on the opposite end of the bench and when they had worried for some time about money, he took the brick from his pocket.

"Ahum!" He cleared his throat.

"Would you two children be interested in buying a tidy nest egg?"

Not even the greenest salesman would start a sales talk that way, but Gabriel thought his gold should be enough.

Bud stared at Sarah, and Sarah touched her head and winked at him.

"No, thanks," Bud answered politely, and the two resumed their discussion.

It was growing late in the afternoon. Gabriel knew that Satan was grinning at him from behind the big elm tree.

"Solid gold," he said uncertainly. "This is no fake. I have lots of them. Selling this one at bargain rates. Ten dollars?"

His tone was hopeful, yet not too much so.

Bud, already tired of the stranger, turned angrily.

"Look," he said. "We got this bench first. Either move along or shut up, will you?"

The fat little man with the girdle breathed deeply and was silent. He listened as they talked over the problem of getting along on fifteen dollars a week, thought of the neat sum he held in his hand, and finally gave up. With a deep sigh, he arose and walked away.

"Screwball," Bud said.

Sarah sniffed.

"If that brick was real gold, we could almost buy a little home. Does he think we're nuts?"

Gabriel heard from a distance, and turned in his tracks.

"Maybe!" he said in a clear voice, and hurried his footsteps toward the entrance of the park.

"WHY not admit it's impossible to peddle that gold to anyone?" Satan begged. "My feet are killing me and you've been puffin' like a whale for the past two hours."

"I don't puff," Gabriel protested. "I'm not the overstuffed fool you make me out to be, and my girdle isn't tight. I'm very happy and comfortable."

"Stubborn ass," Satan said, partly to himself.

"Huh?"

"I said, 'I pass,' " Satan explained. "I'm holding all the aces, so why shouldn't I?"

A look of sudden pity flashed over Gabriel's broad face.

"You're pretty smart, aren't you?"

Satan actually blushed.

"You suggested this," he said. "I'm only here to see the fun."

"And you're sure you're holding the aces?"

Satan nodded curtly.

"Most of them, at least."

"Then remember this," Gabriel let the words sink in slowly. "Sometimes four deuces take the pot."

"Cut the riddles," the tall man pleaded. "Why don't you give up? You can't sell the thing."

Gabriel's eyes flashed.

"But I can give it away. That will still prove that people are gullible enough to accept it."

Satan considered.

"Yes," he said. "It would prove that you are right. I say you can't even give it away. No one believes in gold bricks."

THE hospital looked so inviting that Gabriel couldn't pass it. The sun had gone to bed and night covered the east end. The streets were poor and the people poorer. Surely someone here, in the center of poverty, would take a chance on the golden brick.

Gabriel turned in at the hospital door, walked carefully into the cor-

ridor and looked for a spot to leave the brick.

No one was in sight, except one ample scrubwoman who was working at the far end of the hall. Her back was turned and she looked like a small elephant backing across a tight-wire.

Gabriel pushed a door open and propped it wide with the brick. They would surely find it there. He retreated to the shadows of the street and crossed to the other side.

"Give it away?" Satan asked.

"Not yet. I left it where the scrubwoman will find it in a minute."

"Then we'll wait," Satan agreed. "But I'll bet you get it back again, one way or another."

They could not see what went on ininside. However, Elsie, the scrubwoman with the broad beam, backed her way along the hall until her eyes fell on the open door. It happened to be Doctor Washburn's office and the doctor was expected back for evening work. She had already scrubbed his floor and had closed the door carefully to keep out the dust. Now she was angry.

"Blasted idiot, he was, whoever put that door-stop there," she said, and climbed to her feet. Bending over she picked up the brick. Her eyes widened for a second at the rich, yellow color and the weight of the object. Then they narrowed.

"Fancy new paper weight," she hazarded a guess, and entered Washburn's office. "Probably belongs to his majesty, the sawbones."

She pushed a number of papers to the center of the desk and put the brick on top of them. Then dusting her hands together quickly she returned to the hall.

DOCTOR WASHBURN, large, with a wart on his left ear, came in at once. He scratched the wart as he entered, sat down and started to sort the papers. To do this he had to pick up the brick. It was heavy and the edge cut his finger slightly.

"*Damn!*" He stood up, keeping the brick in his hand and went to the door. "*Elsie!*"

Elsie blushed demurely and hoisted her two-hundred-odd pounds upright.

"Yes, Doctor?"

"Elsie," Washburn said impatiently, "did you leave this damned brick on my desk?"

Elsie was a bundle of nerves and worry.

"Oh! Isn't it yours, sir? I thought . . ."

"Don't give a damn what you thought," he said. "The cussed thing tore the skin of my index finger and I don't want it around."

He turned to the office, saw that the window was open and tossed the brick through the opening.

It was Gabriel's bad luck that at that exact moment he had re-crossed the street and was listening just outside the window through which the brick made its meteor-like flight. Gabriel's bald head, haloed only by a fringe of silver hair was not prepared for the blow.

"IT WOULDN'T be so late," Gabriel protested weakly, "if I hadn't walked under the window and been forced to retire for repairs."

Satan chuckled.

"Chief magistrate gets bonk on the konk," he said. "That won't make very good reading in the *Heavenly Harp*, next edition."

Gabriel looked shocked.

"You—wouldn't—tell?"

Satan looked uncertain.

"We'll see," he said. "Now—what's

your next plan?"

Gabriel pointed to a small cottage wedged between a rose garden and the wall of a freight shed.

"Into homes like that," he started a windy speech, "go Angels of Mercy to help the poor inhabitants. . . ."

"Cut it," Satan said sharply. "Remember, I don't fall for that soft stuff."

Gabriel looked hurt.

"One of my best speeches . . ."

"Save it for the Heavenly rostrum," Satan sneered. "While you're on Earth, relax and talk straight."

Gabriel recovered from his fit of temperament.

"Okay," he agreed. "So, I'm going to leave the brick once more. There are a couple of office girls who live in that cottage. They haven't enough money to live on. They are young and clever. I'm sure they will recognize the worth of the brick."

Satan did a little dance on the deserted walk.

"It seems to me," he hummed, "I've heard that song before . . ."

The cottage had a single light burning in the front room. Gabriel tip-toed to the open window and placed the brick on the table just inside. Then he backed away and put his hand to his lips.

"Girls," he called in a powerful voice. *"Come see what Santa just left."*

As though he had just delivered a May basket, he turned and ran down the steps and across the lawn to the safety of the rose bushes. There he waited patiently.

At first all was silent. Then he caught sight of a dainty robe and the face of a girl of twenty. The girl tip-toed into the lighted room, looked around carefully and turned.

"Grace," she called in a wondering voice. "There's no one here. Come down. It's all right."

Then the other girl, a tall, rather sophisticated model, slunk into sight. Together they dashed for the open window, slammed it down and locked it quickly. Gabriel saw the look of amazement on their faces as they saw the brick.

The younger girl clutched it to her. Then the excitement started. They both grabbed at the brick and a fight ensued. Although he could hear nothing they said, it was clear that both girls wanted the brick.

Gabriel breathed with relief.

His victory was short lived.

The tall girl managed to capture the prize. She rushed to the window and pushed it up hurriedly.

Horror stricken, Gabriel heard her shout.

". . . have to get rid of the thing. You don't know. It's probably some sort of a time bomb."

The brick took a high arc in the air and the window slammed down again.

Gabriel tried to dodge, but the rose thorns had him tightly in their grip. The brick dropped with the precision of a well-aimed block-smasher and the lights went out. Both the lights in the house and the flashing stars in poor Gabriel's aching head.

HALFWAY HOUSE was deserted. This was out of season for passing souls and the keeper of the inn was surprised when Satan and Gabriel both showed up on the same night. Gabriel the keeper put to bed with a poultice on his swelling dome. Satan, in fine humor, ordered rich wine, laughed and drank himself under the table. The keeper of Halfway House was puzzled. To see these two together—and on top of that, Satan the winner of whatever argument had taken place—caused no rest in his anxious heart.

At breakfast he overhead some of the conversation.

"So," Satan guffawed, "you admit that I win. That people are not gullible and led about, but manage to run their own lives?"

Gabriel sipped at warm tea and managed a poached egg. His head was killing him.

"I do," he said, in the tone of a submissive bride at the wedding ceremony.

"And that in spite of all your trouble, you have to admit that people deliberately plot their own course toward my domain. That they know wrong and do not try to evade it?"

Gabriel didn't answer. He had had enough. He arose hastily, donned his robes and walked away.

In his haste, he had overlooked the golden brick. It lay on the table before Satan.

Satan sat quietly for a long time, his greedy eyes on the prize Gabriel had forgotten.

Satan had planned the whole campaign with underworld cleverness. He had influenced Gabriel to attempt a trick that he, Satan, knew could not succeed. His object? To obtain the brick, solid and gold, from the very street of Heaven. A trophy that he could display at home, telling amidst high humor, the fool Gabriel had made of himself when he lost it.

THE trip to Hades was a short one. The short-cut past the first furnace saved Satan as much as half a day. His horse, however, had not been ridden for the past week and was skittish as a young colt. The first furnace was blazing nicely, and Fire Keeper stood near at hand, offering new fuel to the greedy flame.

The accident could not have been avoided. The horse shied to one side suddenly, to escape some imaginary object on the pavement. Satan lost his balance, and in his attempt to regain it, let the brick slip from his cloak.

The gold brick performed a small arc and fell into the hottest part of the flame.

Fire Keeper swore a mighty oath and leaped forward with his shovel.

"Clinkers," he shouted. "Always clinkers. What a mess, and me working all day to get a good even blaze."

Satan was off his horse in an instant, a torrent of oaths pouring from his lips.

"Fool," he screamed at Fire Keeper. "Ignorant fool. That brick is pure gold. Get it out of there before it melts."

Fire Keeper, realizing that his master's anger knew no bounds, leaped into the center of the blaze and shoveled furiously. Even as he worked, Satan hopped up and down at the edge of the pit. Fire Keeper's expression changed slowly as he scooped up the remains of the brick and shoved it out on the edge of the pit . He came up himself hesitantly and stood above the clinker.

He looked puzzled.

"I am sorry, Master," he said sadly, "but that brick was not of gold. You have been fooled. It makes a clinker hard as rock and was only a painted brick of common clay."

Satan's expression vanished. It was replaced by one of hurt and deep-seated distrust.

"That damnable fool of a Gabriel," he muttered a little enviously. "With three aces in my hand back to back, he had four deuces to cover them."

★ ★ ★ Buy More Bonds! ★ ★ ★

THE POWER OF SUGGESTION

A SCIENTIFIC clue to many of the "faith cures" and "healing miracles" may be inferred from two clinical experiences reported by brain surgeons.

The first is furnished by the behavior of an ex-soldier, a young man who had been struck by a high-explosive shell. The result of his accident was paralysis of face, arms, and leg on one side. For nine months, this condition persisted. The man entered the examination room hobbling on a cane. At once he was ordered sharply by the examiner to put down his cane and take a seat in a chair some twelve feet away. Of course, the patient insisted that he couldn't walk without a cane, but upon being told the examiner was quite sure that he could, he laid the cane aside and awkwardly—but unassisted—walked to the chair.

Another case parallels this one. It involved a man who was partially paralyzed and who had walked with a cane for 19 years. During a baseball game, this person hit the ball, and, in great excitement, without pausing to get his cane, ran quickly to first base, beating out the throw. At that point, however, in spite of his achievement, he immediately demanded his cane, saying that he was helpless without it!

The scientific explanation of these cases is as follows:

In the first case, the authority and prestige of the examiner proved to be a sufficiently powerful and emphatic stimulus to reinstate a partially lost function. This reinstatement was produced either by the old nerve connections conducting impulses under "pressure" or other and new connections substituted for them.

In the second case, it seems that a strong incentive or an emotional stimulus can make a patient "forget" his disabilities. It is likely that old pathways in the brain and nervous system are still partially intact, or that other pathways are able to substitute for them. At the present time, the general belief is that the patient's attitude is often the controlling factor in stirring these dormant connections to life. If the suggestions are strong enough, or if the patient's interests can be sufficiently aroused, it has been demonstrated, the strengthened motivation may lead to restoration of lost functions. It is even suspected that this restoration is more dependent upon the emotional drive and the "will-to-do" than upon the degree of physical handicap to be overcome.

The old saying, "Where there's a will there's a way," may have scientific meaning!

★ TUBELESS TIRES ★

CAN you imagine the shock the members of the Petroleum Industry War council got when John B. McGay of Tulsa Oklahoma, told them it was possible to drive a car on tires without tubes?

The event took place at a recent convention of the American Petroleum Institute and the members at first thought McGay, a reputable manufacturer, was a little "tetched in the haid." But when McGay announced that he had driven all the way from Oklahoma to Chicago on tubeless tires the council sat up and took notice. The only mishap was one nail puncture and then the tire didn't go all the way down since the only place the air could leave the tire was at the place the nail had entered and remained fixed. McGay said that if the tire had contained a tube the air would have left the tube and then the tire through the valve stem hole in the rim and soon his tire would have been flat. This didn't happen on his car because the valve opening is sealed tight.

This same method can be easily applied to any car possessing drop center rims which is the type used on the later model cars. The only thing McGay did was to put a valve from a truck tube in the valve stem hole, making sure no air could escape, remove his car's tubes, and fill the tire full of air; the tires stuck to the rim just as tightly as if they had the tubes in them.

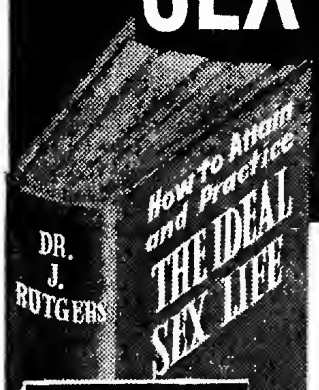
McGay offered his discovery as a possible solution to the present rubber shortage. As we all know, gasoline rationing in the middle west and the west has not been introduced because there is a gasoline shortage but because there is a rubber shortage. By forcing people to drive less, we make sure their tires will last longer, providing, of course, that the tires get good care. McGay, himself, has driven over 6,000 miles with tireless tubes and his example has been followed by many of his friends. Since there is enough rubber in a tube to produce one war grade tire, each motorist could turn in his tubes and get a receipt which would be good, one-for-one, for a war tire when he needed them in the future.

One Chicago tire company official said he thought the plan was not sound since the air would leak out at the point of contact between the tire and the rims. Nevertheless, the members of the Petroleum Institute War Council, went all out for the plan after witnessing the demonstrations and have instructed a committee to make tests in the various districts. If successful, the American motorist may soon get a very welcome addition to his rather small gas allowance in the near future.

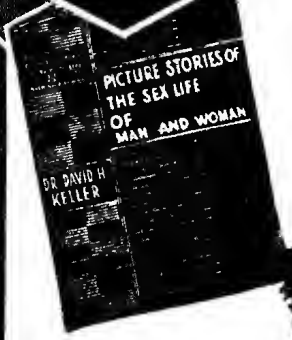
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ROMANCE OF THE ELEMENTS—



OUR OLD FRIEND SIR HUMPHREY DAVY, OF ENGLAND, FIRST DECOMPOSED POTASH AND GOT POTASSIUM IN 1807 WITH THE HELP OF THE THEN-NOVEL VOLTAIC BATTERY.



FROM EARLY DAYS, SCOTTISH SEACOAST DWELLERS USED CRUDE SEAWEED TO FERTILIZE THEIR FARMS. IN OUR NEW ENGLAND, THEY CELEBRATED "KELP DAY" FOR MANY YEARS. IT IS THE POTASSIUM IN SEAWEED THAT MAKES IT VALUABLE FOR FERTILIZING.

DURING WORLD WAR I, THEY FOUND THAT SOME GIANT WEST COAST KELP CONTAINED 16% POTASH! EARLIEST HARVESTERS WERE BEACHCOMBERS WHO RAKED UP KELP AND BURNED IT. THEN CAME OTHERS WHO USED PIANO WIRE TO RIP IT UP.



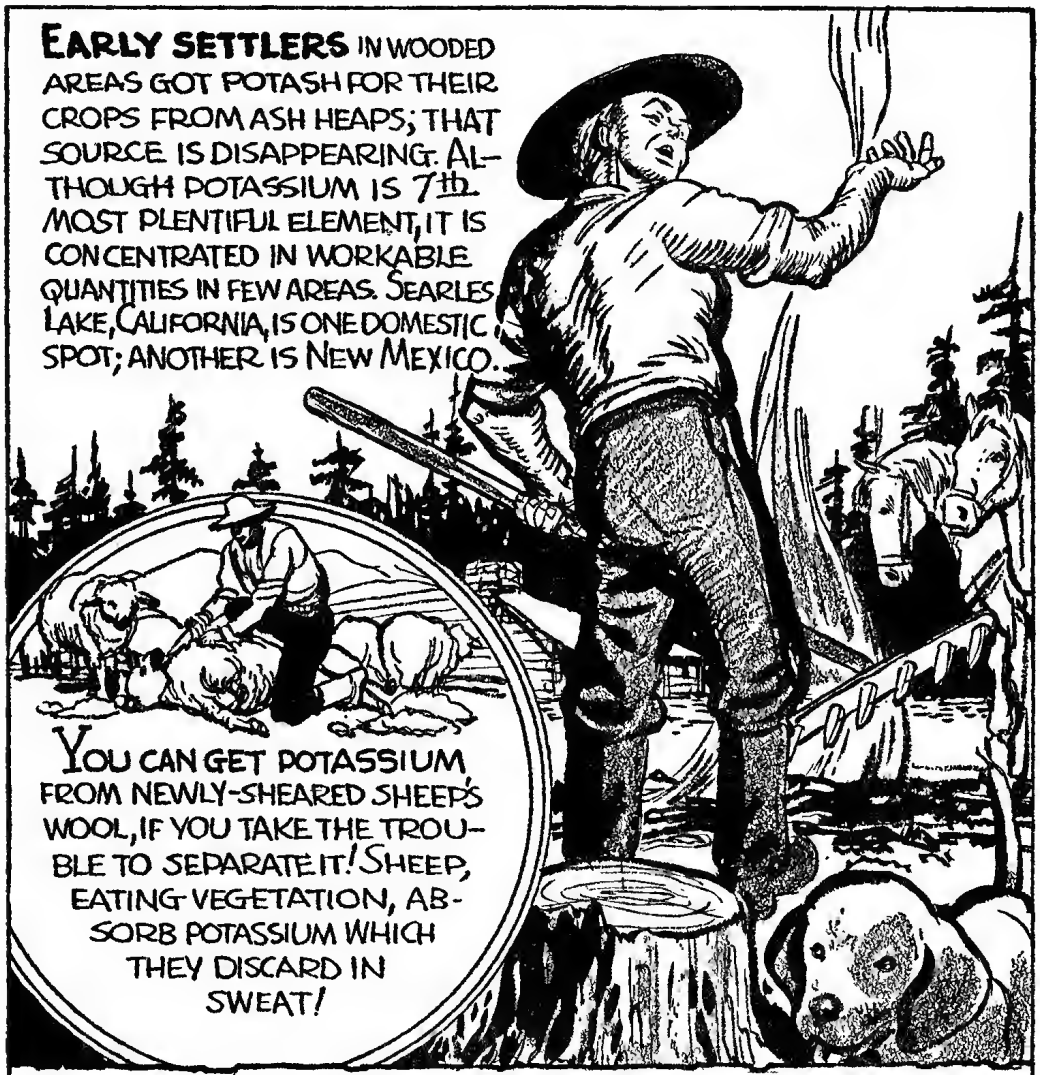


Liebig

NUMBER 1 POTASSIUM USE IS AS POTASH FOR FERTILIZER. FIRST TO REALIZE IT WAS LIEBIG, GERMAN SAVANT WHO TIRELESSLY PREACHED ITS USE IN THE MID-1800'S. SIGNIFICANTLY, THE WORLD'S ONLY COMMERCIAL SOURCE FOR YEARS WAS GERMANY'S STAASFURT MINES.

POTASSIUM . . .

By ROD RUTH and GORDON S. McLEAN



POTASSIUM CAN BE KINDLY OR DEADLY!



POTASSIUM IN FERTILIZER, STRENGTHENS PLANTS STALKS-INCREASES THE SIZE OF KERNELS. IT'S IMPORTANT IN SOFT SOAP, ENAMELS, ARTIFICIAL JEWELS, AND GOOD GLASS. THEY USE ITS SALTS IN PHOTOGRAPHY, IN TANNING, DYEING, AND IN MAKING MATCHES. BUT POTASSIUM IS A CONSTITUENT OF EXPLOSIVES—AND A SWIG OF CYANIDE-POTASSIUM IS QUICK DEATH!

POTASSIUM is number 19 in the International Table of Atomic Weights. Its symbol is K and its atomic waight is 39.096. Pure potassium is a silvery white metal tinged with blue, but on exposure to air forms a thin film of oxida and eventually deliquesces. At temperatures below 0° C. it is hard and brittla; at ordinary tamperatura it can be knaaded by the fingers. Its specific gravity is 0.865; it fuses at 62.5° C.; boils at 760°, emitting an intensaly green vapor. Burns when thrown into water.

(NEXT ISSUE: Tha Romance of Sodium)

HER MAJESTY, THE QUEEN

By CARTER T. WAINWRIGHT

Much fiction has been written about the amazing community life of the common bee, and fantastic tales have been woven concerning them in our pages. Now here is the incredible fact story!

LET us look into a hopeless desolate city, where once flourished a mighty kingdom of bees. Instead of tens of thousands of busily preoccupied inhabitants, hurrying about their business of honey making, we find only a few thousand remnants—amid a hive of sleeping nymphs.

The walls of the hive are a composite of a multitude of six-sided cradle cells, within which lie the developing future generation. It is a peculiar sight indeed to watch the hundreds of workers dancing about the cradles and violently flapping their wings as they do so. What is the purpose of this "dance of birth"?

One acquainted with the habits of bees would probably show little surprise at this apparent meaningless dance. For he would no doubt have already come across the fascinating dance of the honey bee—also the entirely distinctive dance of the pollen-gathering bee. Here we meet a new type of bee dance, perhaps a dance designed to generate the necessary heat needed by the solid walls of developing life. The result, whether so intended or not, actually succeeds in generating a perceivable amount of heat.

Soon the solid walls appear to be moving as many of the seventy or so thousand cradles begin to break open. The nurses immediately rush to each opening cradle and can be seen cleaning, brushing, and feeding a still bewildered and trembling full grown bee.

This new born bee resembles any typical aged and experienced bee. Newly born bees do not travel the long road of experience which ultimately leads to maturity. They are born, even from the first, with the necessary equipment to solve the problems that are constantly arising about them. In fact, no sooner does a bee emerge from her cell, than she begins to dance about the unbroken cells of her sisters in an attempt to stimulate their break-through.

Even though they are so well equipped at birth, it is not till two weeks have elapsed that a bee first pays his respects to madame flower. The first week is spent in the hive; we may call this the week of rest. After this week of rest, the bee may take his first aerial trip and get the clean air absorbed into his tube-like tracheae.

NOT only is the bee a master of flight, but as a navigator is rarely excelled. The bee needs no elaborate scientific instruments, no compass and other man made location gadgets. After five months' hibernation it is actually possible for a bee to locate his hive after miles of wandering.

This is all very good. A beautiful, cozy hive, thousands of developed and developing workers, a growing supply of the precious flower nectar, and a harmonious and cooperative attitude which prevails inside and outside the hive. What then is missing? Yes, you may have guessed the answer to this question. What we need to complete the perfect picture is the birth of *her majesty the queen.*

The members of the nest realize this necessity and soon prepare to initiate the birth of a new queen into the hive society. One portion of the wall—which is composed of hatching cradles—is heavily guarded. This at once tends to indicate that a special prize is developing within these wrinkled wax-like capsules. The eggs that are developing within these special type of capsule, are identical with the common eggs that hatch into the worker bee.

The eggs in the special capsule were taken from the stock of worker eggs and placed in the royal suite by the mother—before she made her departure with the rest of the swarm, never to return again to eggs that were layed. Yet these specially sheltered eggs develop into a different type of bee—into a queen bee possessing an entirely different destiny, instinct, and desires. Also will this egg give rise to an outwardly unique type of bee.

With an abdomen twice as long, curved sting, a color far more golden, less eye facets, and a smaller type of brain, but a perfected reproductive system—will the queen make her final appearance. Her life will be a life of love. She will have no use for brushes or pollen baskets—her aim in life will be to fill the empty cradles

with eggs that will hatch and thus reproduce the race of bee-like insects. On the mind of this bee will he superimposed the idea of race preservation.

What is it that causes an ordinary worker egg to develop into a lovely golden queen? It is thought that a precious milk known as "royal jelly" may be the answer to this perplexing problem. The future queen larvae are fed exclusively on this "royal diet," whereas the worker larvae are fed on a coarser diet of honey and pollen.

SOON the workers begin to thin off the walls of the ripest cell and out comes her majesty, the queen of the hive. There are many more potential queens developing in the royal cell chambers. However, the births of the queens take place at perfectly calculated intervals. Therefore, we find only one young queen hatching at any particular interval of time.

On rare occasions two queens may hatch at the same time. Immediately a fight for survival takes place. Each young queen is jealous of the other and wishes to he the supreme ruler of the hive. The battle is an extremely peculiar one. It starts out resembling a dual suicide. Both queens tangle in such a manner that should either of the queens draw her sting, death would befall both of the combatants.

Before this can occur, the queens seem to realize that this dual suicide can bring disaster to the entire hive, also that only one of them must survive and reproduce a new generation of bee-life. Both queens now separate and fight till there is hut one queen left.

As soon as a first queen has been born into the hive a multitude of problems arise. The queen is of course jealous of the eggs that are developing in the royal chambers. She wishes, of course, to destroy them before they develop into rival queens. It is now up to the workers of the hive to either permit this massacre, or to prevent it.

Many factors enter into the final decision. The hive must decide whether it will take a policy of species multiplication or a policy of hive preservation. They may prevent the queen from a "royal-massacre" and succumb to what is known as "swarming fever." That is they may dispatch three or four huge swarms, each swarm led by a queen, to spread the species of their particular type of bee to new places. These swarms never return and soon have forgotten their old homes. At times these swarms will be sent out prematurely and will meet death at the hands of an unexpected change in climate.

In case the hive decides against this abundant swarming and agrees upon a good home policy instead, two more problems arise. The hive may permit the death of all the future queens immediately, or may wait till they are sure the present queen has completed a successful "wedding-flight."

LET us take a look at that darkest moment in the history of the hive. Let us now attempt to reconstruct the events that take place at a "royal-massacre". The queen is furious. She burns with an unsurpassed jealousy, as she makes her way to the nests of eggs. She rips off the wax layer of the first nest she comes across. If she recognizes a developing queen, she puts it to death by repeatedly stabbing her rival with her poisonous stinger. On and on she goes—slaughter reigns supreme.

Soon we find the queen calmed and exhausted, resting quietly beside the cradles of death. The workers stand by untouched by this terrible hour of death. They act as undertakers and clean out the disrupted nests. They seem to have lost their respect for the future queens they have taken such great pains to nourish. They have decided upon the policy to he taken, and will not disobey the law of the hive. If the murdering queen has become completely exhausted and cannot continue, the bystanders will take over and help to destroy the queen-larvae.

It is interesting to watch the worker bees gorge themselves with royal jelly as they clean out the disrupted nests. After the complete murder job is over, there is left but one queen. This queen is not really a full blooded ruler until she has returned from her "marriage-flight" and is in a position to give off a new generation of strongly rejuvenated stock.

UP TO this point we have assumed that the bees had decided against a second swarm. Suppose the bees elect a policy of species multiplication and do not choose to allow the queen to slaughter the developing royal-larvae. In a case where this decision becomes the law of the hive, we find an entirely different trend of events taking place. Let us attempt to describe this latter sequence.

The jealous queen rushes to the royal-nests as was described before. However, instead of a sympathetic group of bystanders the queen now meets a hostile group of worker-bees. These bees have decided that the queen shall not destroy her sleeping sisters. True, they respect the queen and would sacrifice all in her behalf, but the law of the hive says that the royal-eggs shall not be destroyed and they must obey this law to the point of death. This opposition in policies results in a conflict.

The queen bee rushes to the eggs only to find her path blocked by a body of workers. No matter where the queen turns she finds workers guarding the royal-eggs. No matter how hard she tries to penetrate the guard, she finds that she is unable to budge the unyielding wall of united workers.

The queen bee being frustrated time after time in her attempt to destroy her potential rivals, suddenly stops trying to get past the guards and begins to sing out a war-song. This song can be distinctly heard at a distance of three yards from the hive. It is as if the queen were trying to re-enact the battle of Jericho, as if the queen

were attempting to imitate Joshua and topple down the protecting wall of human worker-bees from about the royal eggs.

Actually, this sharp trumpet-like note has two apparent effects. The first result of this shrill war-cry is to throw a good scare into the hearts of the hostile worker-bees. They seem to realize that they have been fighting with their own queen and cease their disrespectful conduct. They how their heads and wait for the cry to cease.

A second result of this war-cry is to stimulate the developing queens to come out of their protected nests. The developing queens upon hearing the cry, start frantically to gnaw through the wax wall of their cell.

The worker-bees realize the serious danger the hive is now in. If the young queens should gnaw through their protective wax layer cell, they would be an easy prey for the jealous and much older queen bee.

In order to keep this tragedy from taking place, the worker bees begin to pile up wax against the sides of the nest walls as fast as the encased queens can tear down the wax.

It is a peculiar picture to behold; on one side the encased queens tear down their wax prison, and on the other side the workers repair the damage done. The net result is zero. In other words, the jealous queen never gets her chance to destroy her rivals and so the law of the hive wins out in the end and a second swarm is ascertained.

SOON the jealous queen gives up its attempt to kill her rivals. Instead she prepares to lead a migratory movement and establish another colony. She prepares to leave her old hive where she was born, forever, and spread her species of bee far and wide. Off she goes with a swarm of followers never again to return.

As soon as she is gone, the remaining bees—who had not participated in this second swarm—release one of the encased queens. This queen no sooner steps out of her wax-like prison than she also becomes jealous. She attempts to kill off her remaining rivals, and goes through the same song and dance routine as the queen that preceded her. The workers may prevent this second queen from gaining entrance into the wax-like cells by again going into their wax-piling act. They may form another swarm with the second queen at the head, and then release a third queen to take the second queen's place at home.

Sometimes, after an unfavorable season, perhaps when the bee population has met with great losses, the bee hive may become "swarm crazy" and dispatch swarm after swarm until the manpower in the old hive is exhausted. It may be possible to form thirty colonies in a single season. Usually, the bees will allow the third queen to kill off its rivals and restore a domestic order to the old hive. Actually, this decision to allow the destruction of the spare queens places the hive in a dangerous position. What if the only remaining queen should die? What if the queen should meet with an accident during her "marriage-flight"? And one of these unforeseen occurrences would place the hive in a critical state, for at this age it is impossible to transform a worker's egg into the queen form.

Since it is the queen that lays those precious eggs which guarantee the preservation of the present species of bees, one can readily realize just how serious the loss of an only queen would be to the members of the hive. To have lived and not provided for a future generation to take the places left by those that die, is the greatest crime a bee or any other form of animal can commit. It is contrary to the basic law that governs all his actions—the law of preservation of species.

ACTUALLY, our queen is still a virgin. She has not as yet met a male drone—has not as yet journeyed with bim high above the blue horizons, taking from him the magic seeds of life and leaving him to die—a martyr for the future cause of bee life.

The activities of the hive are well planned and well timed. The virgin bee must meet the male within the first twenty days of her life. If necessary, tbe virgin queen can lay eggs without having partaken of a "marriage-flight." There is, however, a serious drawback to this type of virgin egg laying. Odd as it might sound, a virgin queen can only lay male eggs. Maybe this represents an attempt on the part of nature to increase the male population and thus make sure that a repetition of this virgin egg laying shall not occur.

Perhaps it is a punishment inflicted upon the entire colony because they had failed to obey the basic law of the hive. At any rate, this virgin egg laying leads to a complete annihilation of the hive. The male bees that hatcb as a result of this virgin type of egg laying are extremely parasitic. What a life of luxury they livc! All day they sit about doing nothing, living off the hard working female bees. The best and choicest of flower nectar goes to them, as well as the best living quarters of the hive.

As a result of this parasitic condition the perfectly balanced economic set-up of the hive is disrupted and soon the female workers die of exhaustion. When the female workers die, the male drones can no longer look to servants for their meals, as a result they also perish because of their inability to cope with the new environment they have been thrust into.

It is odd when we think of a virgin queen—never having come into contact with a male sperm—capable of producing thousands of drones, who in turn produce millions of male sperms.

This all tends to show the unpredictable ways in which nature governs her domain. While studying the ways of nature manifested in the actions of her simple children, many fascinating and odd stories are unraveled. Here is one of the oddest and most interesting stories of all—the story of the triongulins.

THE triongulins are a primitive and highly parasitic larvae. The victims of tbeir parasitic activities are a solitary type of bee that builds its nest in subterranean galleries. The triongulins are clever rascals. They wait for the bee to come home to his gallery and then ambush him. In the neighborhood of five triongulins will leap upon the back of the bee as he enters his home; soon all will bury themselves beneath the hairy layer of the bee's back.

Instead of fighting the bee to the survival of the strongest, as is so common in animal life, the triongulins remain peacefully concealed in the hairs of the bee's back. They accompany the bee on his trips to the flower gardens. They sit idly by and watch the hee extract his precious flower nectar. What they are really waiting for is the bee's eggs. No sooner does the bee lay an egg when all five triongulins spring upon it.

The bee is oblivious to all that occurs about him. He carefully places his egg—along with the five triongulins clinging to the sides of the egg—in its wax sealed tomb and goes about his work, happy with the idea that he has obeyed the first law of the hive. Little does he suspect that by sealing his offspring in the same tomb with the five hungry triongulins he has ensured its death.

Soon the greedy triongulins take to fighting among themselves. Each wants the entire egg. While the others fight to the bitter end, one of tbe triongulins leaps upon the egg and bursts it open. Soon the battle between the other four triongulins comes to a close. One of the four is the victor and the other three are dead. There is no mercy in a battle of this type. Nature wants only the strongest to survive; the verdict for the weaker is death.

WHAT a surprise is in store for the victorious triongulin, as he makes his way toward the spoils of victory for which he fought so hard to get. No sooner does he get to the egg, than he learns of the sneaking act that had occurred behind his hack while he was so busily engaged in hattle. For on the very egg itself lies another triongulin, busily engaged in appeasing his pre-natal appetlte.

The victorious triongulin flings himself upon the robber of the egg. Instead of offering a defense, the triongulin on the egg gives up. Now the victorious triongulin is all alone with the precious egg. He sticks his head into the cavity of the egg and begins to devour its contents. Here, however, is the peculiar climax to this story. If the triongulin driven from the egg had eaten any part of the egg before he was driven off, then this victorious triongulin must die. It seems that an entire egg is needed for the development of a triongulin, and if a portion of the egg was eaten by the previous triongulin, no development—and hence death is the result for the victorious triongulin.

After a story of this type (based upon the information of M. Mayet on this subject) one can fully appreciate the mysteries and oddities which belong to nature and also realize how small is man's intellect when it comes to solving riddles of this type.

Yet, if you are fascinated by the mysterious, nothing will hold you more spellbound than the story of the *"Wedding-Flight"*.

LIVING about the virgin queen are hundreds of male drones—honey drunk and created solely for a single moment of supreme sacrifice. It is odd indeed that a queen should risk her important life and go off on the extremely dangerous wedding flight, perhaps never to return again—a victim of a bitter cold spell or perhaps a severe rain storm. Why must the queen take this hazardous path when all ahout the virgin queen are hundreds of strong drones, each capable of fertilizing her? Why must a queen go searching in the far off horizons when all about her are the subjects for which sbe searches?

No one knows the answer to this perplexing prohlem. All we do know is that the male drones are indifferent to the virgin queen when they come in contact with her in the hive. Every day, usually in the afternoon and when the weather is suitable for a flight, twenty or more trihes—representing as much as ten thousand strong—will sweep the skies in search for a virgin queen. Actually, only about ten of these ten thousand suitors will fertilize the virgin queens; the fate of the other drones, as well as the fate of the drone that does the fertilizing, is the same. All must die, for they are of no use to the hive once the queen is fertilized.

It is a fact, that a prosperous and well organized hive will at any time produce only a minimum of drones. On the other hand, it is the poorly organized and failing hive that produces the enormous numbers of male drones.

Let us point out some of the interesting highlights in the life of a drone. Even from the first moment of development and birth they are pampered. What a wasteful life they live. Only the most comfortable part of the hive will suit their particular tastes. In mid-afternoon they hunt the adventures of the far off horizon. Off they go into a sky of blue, each hoping that that day might be their lucky day . . . that during their journey they might venture upon the lovely queen of the hive.

Usually at ahout 3 P. M. they return to their hive in utter exhaustion from the weary flight they have undertaken. Straight for the honey vats they bead, and soon we find them filling their tired body with the flower nectar the female bees worked so hard to get.

The drones are noted for their enormous appetites, and you can be sure that they eat more than their share, for it takes from five to six worker bees to serve one drone. The workers watch the male bees eliminate their wastes upon the best honey, watch them lounge about making nuisances of themselves. They are patient for they know the day of judgment will come.

WHEN that day of reckoning finally arrives, it does so without warning. Early one morning the command is given to destroy all the parasitic and useless drones. A group is chosen and they are given the assignment to kill and not stop killing till the last of the drones is dead.

Little do the drones suspect, as they slumber peacefully through the morning, what is in store for them that fatal day. How surprised they must be when they awake to find themselves staring into the eyes of a hostile group of workers —those very workers that once served their every command and who now approach them—not with honey, but with jagged stingers and knife-like jaws.

The drones are pulled from their place of slumber and dragged around and around in sort of a ceremonious procession. Soon their destruction begins. They are thrown upon their backs and pulled apart—limb by limb. Their wings are torn off. The magnificent antennae with its thirty-seven thousand eight hundred olfactory cavities are destroyed. Their legs are ripped from their attachments.

WHEN the drones succumb to their horrible wounds they are removed to cemeteries. It is a pitiful spectacle to behold. It makes one wonder at the five points of nature's scheme—first to bring a race of practically useless drones to this earth and then have them destroyed in so horrible a fashion. However, we must bear in mind the fact that nature knows no pity. Nature is determined to run a universe in the most efficient manner possible and uses all possible means, regardless of whom they may affect, to attain the desired end.

Just how clever is a bee? What are his mental capacities? Just how far can a bee reason, and to what degree can he modify his instinctive actions—in order to meet a changing set of circumstances which may confront him?

Before answering these questions by a discussion of the results of a set of interesting experiments conducted by J. Henri Fabre, let us place the bee in the proper position he occupies in the animal tree; in this manner we can get an intelligent idea of the capacities of the bee.

The bee belongs to one of the most successful of all the animal divisions—namely, the phylum orthropoda. All members of this phylum have developed a hard resistant covering on the outside of their bodies, the exoskeleton, composed primarily of a durable substance known as chiton. The bee does not possess a lung, nor does he use a rapid flowing blood stream to carry oxygen to his oxygen-starved cells.

This answers the question as to why the bees and other insects do not completely control our world—also why none of the insects grow larger than the smallest mouse. Actually, if we measure the success of a particular type of animal by the number of offspring or variations that this particular animal has brought upon this earth, then it is a true fact that the insects are more successful than the humans. It is only because of man's superior intelligence and his great size (when compared to the corresponding size of an average insect) that man is now the master of this earth.

WHY did man develop in size while the bee was destined to remain dwarfed and hence physically and mentally inferior? As was stated before, it is the respiratory systems of both animals that probably proved the deciding factor. A bee can never become large so long as he breathes by means of air tubes. For this type of breathing requires that all the vital organs of the bee be aggregated about a small area—no widely separated structures possible since the air tube method of breathing is a very slow and cumbersome affair when used through a considerable distance.

On the other hand, man employs a rapid transporting air system in the bloodstream, capable of supplying even the remote cells with a quick supply of the vital oxygen. So man grew large and being large could develop a complex form of nervous system which would enable him to think and reason his way through any type of external conditions forced upon him.

As far as the development of the nervous system is concerned, the bee has gone a long way in perfecting a precise and highly instinctive type of mental set up. Just how far the bee has progressed in his ability to solve problems—is briefly illustrated by some of the observations made by J. Henri Fabre, on the conduct of a mason bee.

In the first place, it was found that a mason bee can cope with those emergencies which do not force the bee to change the type of work the bee was doing when the emergency occurred. For instance, a bee building a lid with which to cover her nest will patch up a hole made in this lid, when the bee went off to get more mortar.

However, in the second case where the bee must change its occupation or retrace its past history, the bee is at a loss for action. If a bee is busily occupied gathering honey, she will never turn mason and mend a leaking honey container. She would rather see her precious honey leak out than switch her occupation.

We have gone a long way since the beginning of this brief article. We have delved into the secret life of the virgin queen and watched the parasitic drone live his life of luxury—later to meet his violent and unjustifiable death. Now we come to the end of our story. Nature, however, never reaches an end; she is constantly at work regulating, calculating, and keeping the entire animal and plant kingdom in a harmonious type of equilibrium, which is so sensitive, that to upset it in the slightest would bring chaos to all the living organisms of this earth.

»»» *Introducing* «««

THE AUTHOR

I GET a great kick out of seeing the way the readers take to my stories, but for the life of me, I can't understand why they'd care to read about my unexciting life, or look at my photograph. But the editor asked for it, so here it is. Make of it what you will . . .

My life has been about average, I believe. I've had a lot of fun, and I've done a lot of work—not as much as I'd like to, but right now it seems the war is demanding that I get up on my hind legs and do it. So, really, the war is a break for me, getting me into technological work that I'd have to crash into by pure force otherwise.

It's that technological work that's kept me from turning out as much fiction as I could more than likely sell to unsuspecting editors like Ray Palmer, but he keeps pestering me, so instead of going to a movie with my wife in the evening, I make her mad at me by sitting down at the typewriter. The net result is I have to buy her something with the money, and I get nowhere!

But frankly, you readers, I like writing science fiction and I've always liked reading it. I suppose I'll keep on writing and reading it. I especially admire the work of David Wright O'Brien, William Brengle, G. H. Irwin, William P. McGivern, and Frank Patton.

As for details about myself, I was born in California, and still live there. I am old enough to be above draft age, and remarkably well preserved for a fellow who's blown up more chemicals than his basement was built to stand.

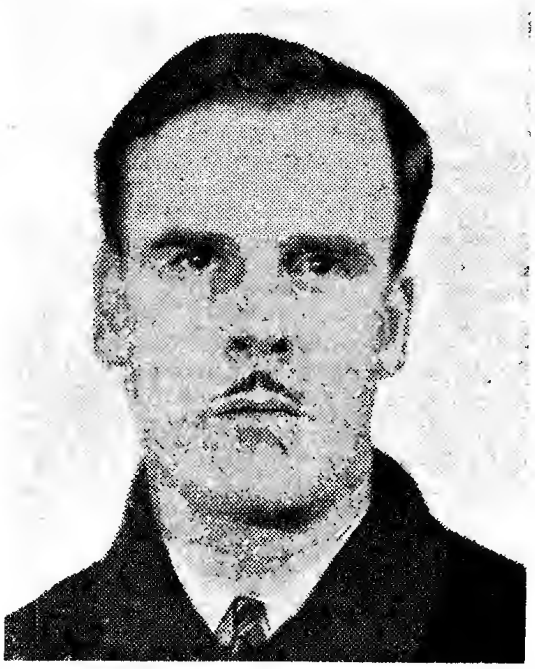
I am exactly six feet tall, dark hair, brown eyes, and my wife persuaded me to grow a mustache—because she says it looks so romantic! Oh, well, she's a pretty sweet little woman. and I'd do anything for her . . .

I went to the California Institute of Technology, and studied for awhile under the tutelage of the General Electric scientists, but they finally decided I couldn't add anything to their refrigerators except maybe gas, and they had enough of that.

I studied under myself after that, and wound up studying the moon beside the girl who became my wife—so that I could resume my beneficial studies, she said.

That was in 1930, and the depression was nothing to sneeeze at. But thank heaven, I always managed to supply a few edibles to the family table, and my wife supplied the courage to keep on studying.

In 1935 I got a job with a large chemical experimental laboratory in San Francisco, and we moved there for a couple of years. But we liked sunshine, and I didn't like bosses, so we quit. We spent 1938 just traveling around the country on a vacation that cost us more money than I care to admit—because it was all of it!



Frank Patton

Then Hitler invaded Poland, and I knew what it was I wanted to do. It wasn't until Pearl Harbor that I really got to doing it, though. And now I can't talk about it, except to say it isn't doing Hitler any good.

As for fiction, "The Test-Tube Girl" was my first sale (after a dozen rejections). I've sold a few since—you've read them all, if you read this magazine and its excellent sister *Amazing Stories*. Actually, the wordage isn't high yet, but I plan to do a couple thousand words a week in the future, and maybe you'll be seeing some of it.

After the war, I plan to open my own little chemical "works" and have a laboratory where I can putter around at a few things I've had in mind for years. Maybe I'll be able to make plastics out of hot air, or rubber out of clouds—who can tell. I've seen things lately that makes me almost believe anything can be done. Meanwhile, I'll keep plugging at the problems the war puts up to me, and I'll solve 'em too. damn you, Hitler!

READER'S PAGE

PUBLIC AWAKENING?

Sirs:

I want to tell you that you are doing a fine job during the crisis to put out such a marvelous collection of stories. Keep the articles going. Paul thrills me with his covers.

Have you noticed that the public is slowly but surely reading scientific fiction? For instance, the following are what you might call literature—that is, out of the pulps at least: "The Last Flower"—Thurber; "A Voyage to Cacklogallinia"; "Mr. Tompkins In Wonderland"—Gamow; "Islandia"—Wright (could this fit here?); "Upsidonia" (certainly does).

ROBERT JOSEPH MASTELL,
120 W. 31st Street,
Hibbing, Minn.

Yes, we believe in the future of the fantasy type fiction, based on science. And we concur with your belief that the general public is becoming more conscious of its existence. Thanks for your kind comments.—ED.

STORIES FOR CAMP EVENINGS

Sirs:

Last year at Camp Merrimac at night I used to tell stories to the fellows in the bunk, but I ran out of them very quickly. No fear of that this summer—I'm going well stocked with stories. And I mean good stories, like "The Ice Queen," an honest to goodness thriller; and "Mister Trouble"—now that's a tale of humor with a trick ending!

EUGENE M. DARCY,
249 W. 109 St.,
New York, N. Y.

We're thrilled to know our magazine serves as the basis for those delightful evening story-telling bees at summer camp. And very glad you like us, Eugene!—ED.

CORRECTION

Sirs:

I have just finished reading your latest issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES and I think that it was one of the best so far.

I would like, however, to make one little correction. In the story, "Dinky Winky Woo" it is stated that the animal bent down to Hubert to pick him up. As I recall, it says: "And with that the huge prehistoric *mammal* bent down to Hubert."

The dinosaurs were *reptiles*, my friend!

K. L. PARKER,
995 Fifth Ave.,
New York, N.Y.

Absolutely, Mr. Parker! Thanks for the correction. Your editor is plenty red-faced!—ED.

OKAY, YOU'RE CHAMP!

Sirs:

This is my first letter to any magazine, and I hardly hope to see it in print. Let me say, however, that FANTASTIC ADVENTURES is the best on the market. I don't care a lot about the drawings, but the stories are plenty good. I claim to be the youngest reader. I am six years old.

J. O. HEDGPETH,
Route 9, Box 88,
Charlotte, N. C.

Some of the faithful readers who have been with us for years will get rather red-faced to discover the fiction they like appeals to a youngster like you—but they needn't. Personally, we are greatly gratified to know that we are able to present stories which are so well done that they have their appeal to all ages. You know, yours truly confesses he enjoys these stories immensely himself, and he's a great deal more than six years old! —ED.

WHAT'S RIGHT—WHAT'S WRONG

Sirs:

I have elected myself to tell you what's right and what's wrong with old F.A.

WHAT'S RIGHT WITH FANTASTIC

Finlay's illustrations. Did you notice the man's face in the leaves in the pic for "Little Yowlie"? Boy, the *work* Finlay must put into his pics!

Lefty Feep, even if his stuff *is* wearing kind of thin. Maybe if you gave Bloch a rest now and then . . .

"Other Worlds." More of Blodgett, please. But don't let him degenerate into "lost race" hack. A good story, Walton. I didn't lose interest for a moment. Many thanks for bringing us this tale.

Paul's illustrations. He sure puts in a bunch of details, doesn't he? I'll betcha that this picture wasn't drawn after the story was written. Look at the Jap in the foreground.

Back covers. It wasn't anything exceptional, however, this time. Why not have 'em depict

a story? They deserve more than just a one-page article.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH FANTASTIC

"The Three Musketeers." How did *they* sneak in? The only thing fantastic about them is their presence in the mag. McCune wrote a good enough story, but once is enough for the lads.

Not enough fantasy in F.A. You're putting too much emphasis on the adventure angle. Also, the war. Fantasy is escapist material.

FANTASTIC ADVENTURES needs stories by Bond, Wellman, Rice, Long, Derleth, and Bloch (aside from Feep). A weird little tale by Kuttner would be welcome.

F. A. needs Bok.

Wilcox's science. On page 74 he says: "The doctor's atom-building plant must have . . . etc. . . . etc. . . ." To this, I say "Shriek 1 ! !" Oh, no, Mr. Wilcox, no, no! Isn't there a law of physics that goes something like this: "Matter (and energy) can neither be created nor destroyed?"

The reader's page needs more controversial epistles and less "Ah, dear editor, I love you, your mag, everybody . . ."

G. WAIBLE,
1219 N. E. ROSELAWN,
Portland, Oregon.

No, we didn't *see the face—nor the hands reaching down for the girl. Like an innocent child we saw only a tree. Oh, dear . . .*

Bloch is switching to straight fiction for awhile, and we think you'll find he's done a marvelous job when we begin presenting his new work. We have some Feeps in the house to come first, however . . .

Right about Blodgett! He made a surprising hit with his story.

Right about Paul.

Isn't putting three ancient characters in modern times fantasy? So, there's your answer as to how the musketeers got in?

It is very hard to get stories by the men you mention. Several are in the army, Kuttner for one. Bond is a prominent radio writer now.

We believe Wilcox did not infer that he was creating *atoms, only duplicating them. His machine provided energy which was used to form matter in this duplicating process. At least we got that impression when we read the story, and perhaps it was not as obvious as we believed. Anyway, thanks for the comment. We want our readers to get the correct slant on these scientific details.*—ED.

TRUTH AND FANTASY

Sirs:

I have often found that the truth and fantasy fiction sometimes run together. I speak particularly of the strange similarity of some stories published by fiction magazines, and then finding that these same stories have a true counterpart.

Recently I read a story in the American

7 Day FREE TRIAL

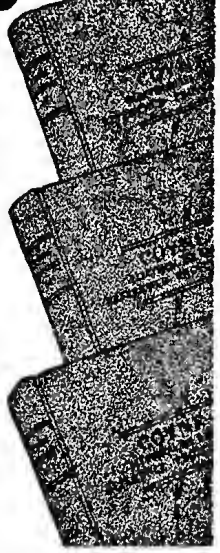
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Weekly entitled "Hangman Vines And The Black Butterflies Of Death." This article concerned vines that entangle and strangle their victims. And always there are fantastically large black butterflies hovering near. The story also contains a cave where treasure is supposed to be hidden. This story reminded me of a similar one published in your magazine last September entitled "The Deadly Yappers" by Max Overton—also a story about butterflies of death.

Could you please tell me if Ned Hadley and Julian Krupa are one and the same person?

ALAN BRUCE,
Box 152-B, Rt. 1,
Black Mtn, N. C.

Yes, FANTASTIC ADVENTURES *has very often beaten the truth to the punch with its fiction. It seems our authors use their imagination in a very logical manner, and much that they imagine turns out to be true after some time has passed. Perhaps it is prophecy?*

No, Hadley and Krupa are not the same person. Mr. Krupa is a member of our own art department, and Mr. Hadley is a free-lance artist living in Chicago. His forte has been religious illustrations, and advertising layouts. He drew our attention with his detail work, and he succeeded in proving he also had a scientific imagination.—ED.

APOLOGY

Sirs:

I owe Virgil Finlay an apology. A previous critical letter of mine belittled the artist. The letter was headed "Better Than Finlay." At one time I read a fantasy mag which was beautifully illustrated. I never bothered to glance at the signature of the artist, but I did notice the technique that was used. That technique was the art of pointilism.

Upon my first reading of your magazine, I saw it again. This time I did notice the signature. It was that of Magarian. Immediately I gave the credit for those previous drawings to this artist, little realizing that it was a misconception. You see, it had been Virgil Finlay who had created those first illustrations.

A much debated argument has been which of the two is better. A comparison of the two artists reveals that their apparent identical styles are different, therefore each is master of his own method. Let us have more of these artists' illustrations, and also, let us give greater recognition to the splendid work being done by the entire art department.

ROLAND L. BERNS,
1520 S. Karlov Ave.
Chicago, Illinois.

You'll get a great many illustrations by both artists, Mr. Berns, and we promise you they will be some of the finest we've ever seen.—ED.

HE DOESN'T KICK

Sirs:

I have just finished reading your August issue

of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. Please allow me to compliment you on the fine stories it contained. I was dissatisfied with only one part, the Reader's Page. It seemed all the letters you published had something to kick about. I do not. I have been reading your magazine for quite a while. I also get *Amazing Stories* and *Mammoth Detective* and I have rarely found a single item which has dissatisfied me. Most of your letters (when complimentary) give praise to the author. I do not. I give all my praise to you, the editors. For if it wasn't for you, who knows what junk we readers would have to put up with?

Again I thank you for your wonderful magazines. Keep up the good work.

MARVIN ROSINSKY,
1678-45th Street,
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Thanks for your kind words, but really, if you knew some of these writers personally you'd realize that the best stories we receive are stories where the author is unhampered by any editorial direction, and is enabled to write exactly the story he wants to write.—ED.

HOW THEY RATE

Sirs:

I just had to write and say that your July issue was wonderful. This is how I classify the stories:

1. "Craig's Book"—complicated, but good.
2. "Caverns Of Time"—let's have more of this type.
3. "Nazi, Are You Resting Well?"—short, but good reading.
4. "If You Believe"—can't describe my feelings in words.
5. "Little Yowlie"—very human.
6. "Other Worlds"—best yet.
7. "The Goon From Rangoon"—Lefty Feep's grammar is something for the books. Although he is something I could do without and not miss, I do get a chuckle once in a while.

SANDY SHELL,
848 Manhattan Ave.
Brooklyn, N. Y.

We found your listing very interesting, and we appreciate your kindness in writing us to give us your opinions. Letters like yours keep us on our toes in selecting material for future issues.—ED.

OLD MASTERS?

Sirs:

One hears a lot of talk about the "old Masters." Bunk! What's the matter with the new "masters?" It's the old story. To parody—a writer is not without recognition save in his own time. Just because a current writer is so much closer—in a manner of speaking—he is automatically relegated to the ranks of "hack." It would seem that a story to be good must be "aged in the wood."

Certainly the oldtimers were good—but so



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what? No one ever belittle's Shakespeare on the grounds that Aeschylus predated him. Why then should some "character" deprecate the "Rocket Rangers" (whoever they are) just because someone created a Buck Rogers some years before? It's the same old falling of mankind that gave Galileo such a headache. People are just afraid of a change—always have been, and I see little hope for them if they always remain that way.

Not that I can't look back with longing to many of the tales written in days gone by: Merritt's "Moon Pool"; Weinbaum's "Martian Odyssey," etc. But on the other hand, I am quite sure that I shall remember with much the same nostalgia many of the stories of today.

Time changes. So has Fantasy. But, just because it has changed is no reason to say that it has changed for the worse. History is a wonderful thing, but this day and age too shall be history some day—we should all be glad to be a part of it instead of eternally casting it aside in favor of another.

Your magazine supplies a very definite need in the overlapping fields of science-fiction and fantasy; and here is two bits you can always count on no matter who writes the yarns, just so they are good.

PVT. RAYMOND G. HOLMES,
Military Secret,
U. S. A.

The only thing we can add to this letter is the fact that your editors are firmly convinced that today's fantasy, and especially the fantasy we present in these pages, is infinitely better on the average than the fantasy fiction accredited to the "old masters." Those early writers had nothing on today's "masters" for real class!—ED.

"GOOD OL' DAZE"

Sirs:

It saddens me that FA is to go bi-monthly. If I had my way I would much rather see you return to the pre-1942 size, give us trimmed edges, and continue to charge 25c, while printing the kinds of classic stories you did a few years ago. You see, I started reading FANTASTIC ADVENTURES when it was just entering its golden age, and printing such stories as "Carson Of Venus;" "The Liquid Man;" "Return Of Circe" etc. To be sure, Wilcox can always be counted on for an extremely entertaining story, but he needs Burroughs, Farley, Merritt, et al., to accompany him.

GENE HUNTER,
2232 N. W. Irving,
Portland, Oregon.

The paper situation does not permit us to return to the old size, monthly. Edgar Rice Burroughs is in the Pacific as a war correspondent —he is doing no fiction; Ralph Milne Farley is also very busy in Uncle Sam's service, being a Lieutenant-Colonel we believe; A. Merritt is editor of the American Weekly, and cannot be persuaded to write. Thus, it seems Wilcox must *go it alone!*—ED.

Gentlemen!

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A TERROR OF THE FOREST

By Lynn Standish

ALERT, swift, dauntless, the Cooper's Hawk, a bird known as "the forest rover," carries terror to the weaker creatures, leaving behind it only destruction and death.

The Cooper's Hawk found in the United States and Canada, is fledged in the wind-swept woods, its first greeting from the forest being the cracking and groaning of giant trees. When its loud "cucks" ring through the sunny woods, the cheerful thrushes and warblers can no longer remain so. All become silent—death is in the air.

This hawk hunts more or less on the wing, usually flying low near the ground or at a very moderate height above the trees, darting suddenly upon any victim taken by surprise. Its great speed is reached almost immediately, and it can alight on a perch in a split second. The Cooper's Hawk will follow a bird into a thicket, often plunging through by sheer velocity, so driving its victim out into the open.

The usual method of this "terror," however, is a little more subtle. It hides itself in a tree near some clearing, lake, or stream, from which, by sudden thrusts, it surprises and captures its unsuspecting prey. Often it drifts about in the most nonchalant manner, quietly alighting in a tree near a poultry-yard and watching its chance until, unobserved, it can swoop straight down and bear away a chicken.

Common among such barnyard incidents is the situation when the hawk will kill a full-grown pullet or a hen too heavy to carry off. When opposed by the rooster, it has been known to grapple with him and leave him lying dead on the ground. It then struts in the full glory of its realization of a great victory—and the tasty parts of both dead fowl will soon be the hawk's to carry off.

The greatest enemy of the Cooper's Hawk is the human being. When the nest is approached by a human intruder, the parent birds usually keep out of gun-shot and confine their protests to complaining "cucks," more on the whimpering side than on the usual battle-cry level. Occasionally a bold bird will dart down toward the intruder although none have ever been known to strike a man.

Always the student of trickery, the Cooper's Hawk hits its peak when it "double-crosses" the other birds in the forest. Its thievery is so adroit that often the bird is not seen or suspected, while the soaring hawks, such as the Red-shouldered or the Red-tailed Hawk, have to pay the penalty, because they are so conspicuous and may be seen occasionally soaring over the hen-yard.

The Cooper's Hawk is so powerful that it can destroy animals of superior size and weight. Thus, it kills rabbits, grouse, ducks, squirrels, and small birds. When game is scarce it will content itself with snakes and other reptiles, or even mice, grasshoppers and crickets.



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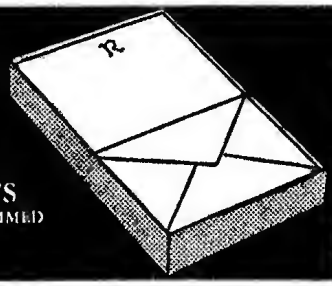
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THE SPHINX OF THEBES

By MORRIS J. STEELE

One of the most glamorous legends of history is that of the mysterious sphinx which takes so many varied forms in so many different lands and times

(See Back Cover)

MOST of us think instantly of the Sphinx at Giza, Egypt, when this strange creature is mentioned. But the Giza effigy is hut one of literally dozens of similar creatures, none of which have the same characteristics.

For instance, the ordinary sphinx has a lion's hody and a human head, not necessarily female. The Sphinx of Giza, contrary to general misconception, has a male head, that of the sun god, Harmachis, and very likely the image of the ruler of the IVth Dynasty, which probably huilt it. We cannot he sure of this, for the inscriptions were added by the XVIIIth Dynasty.

The Greek Sphinx had wings and a female bust; and the temples at Thebes are guarded by true sphinxes, having bodies of rams, and the so-called criosphinxes having lion hodies and the heads of the sacred animal of Ammon.

A falcon-headed sphinx was dedicated to Harmachis in the temple of Ahu Simhel. It is distinguishahle from the gryphon only by the ahsence of wings.

In Assyria the sphinx appears with a hearded male head on cylinders; the female sphinx lying down and possessing wings. This sphinx dates from the seventh century B.C. and is found in the palace of Esar-haddon.

The Phoenician sphinx is a copy of the Egyptian, and is sometimes hearded.

The Persians also had a sphinx, but he never took the form of sculpture, being used only for jewelry, mainly intaglio and gems. The hair was curled, and not straight, as in the Egyptian.

Obviously, to ancient peoples, the sphinx was a real creature, and we have stories (especially among the Greeks) of sphinxes carrying off children, and the prohability of this being true is highly regarded among students of the ancient legend. This belief spreads all over the world, and appears in Yucatan especially, among the Mayas. Here, too, they are represented as being both male and female and are startlingly like those of Egypt and Asia Minor.

What it really was, most probably, was nothing more than the two most common body forms, that of the lion and the ram. The lion, seen at a distance, could be mistaken for a sphinx, and said to possess either the head of a man or a woman, by reason of its mane. A very hushy mane would suggest the head of a man (more likely in Assyria and Persia where male head adornments went to quite extensive hirsute arrangements), and the sleek head of a lioness would suggest a female. The same can be said of the ram and its horns. (Consider the startling resemblance of a ram's horns to the curled hair-do of the ancient Persian).

No actual remains of an animal which might have had a human-like head have ever been found, and we can entirely discount such a phenomenon.

The most well-known legend of the sphinx is that of Thebes, in Boeotia. We find first mention of her in the writings of Hesiod, who calls her the daughter of Orthus and Chimaera. He gives her the face of a woman, the feet and tail of a lion, and the wings of a bird. According to him, she dwelt at the south-east corner of Lake Copias on a bald, rocky mountain called Phicium (which today we know as Fagas)..

Hesiod is challenged by Apollonius, who says she was the offspring of Typhon and Echidna, and that she did not have wings. Both agree, perhaps significantly, to the location of her hahitat.

The legend speaks of the Muses, perhaps out for a little fun, teaching the sphinx of Thebes a riddle, which she used as a method of baiting the Thehans. They were forced to guess it, and whenever they failed (which was always) she carried one of them off and devoured him. The riddle was this one: "What is that which is four-footed, two-footed, and three-footed?"

A Thehan named Oedipus finally guessed the correct answer, namely that it was man—for man crawls on all fours in infancy, walks on two legs at manhood, and depends on a cane in his old age.

Enraged at his correct answer, the sphinx hurled herself down the mountainside and was killed.

The Chinese bave a peculiar legend in which a creature very similar to the sphinx appears. It seems that a very long time ago, when the ancestors of the Chinese were in a strange land (the mother land) which was nowhere on Earth (some students claim that it was the moon), a very clever scientist engaged in a hit of surgery which resulted in the creation of a monster, half-human, half-animal. The animal is indefinitely defined as a winged dragon, startlingly similar to Greek legends of the Sphinx, of the Egyptian Gryphon.

The Chinese sphinx devoured its creator and flew off into a great cave where all was eternal darkness. It is there to this day.



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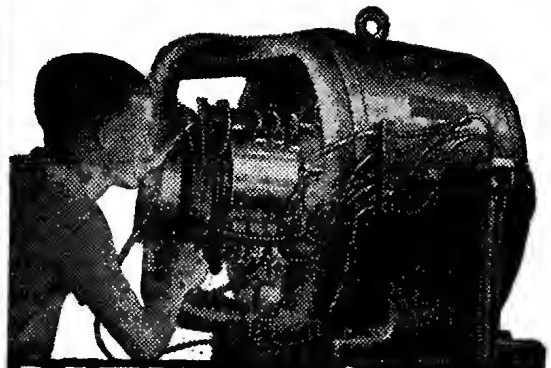
THE kangaroo and its pouch have excited much comment and laughter. Yet the kangaroo is only one of a large family of pouched animals who range in size from the tiny possum to the giant kangaroo.

The opossum is found in North America and is the only marsupial not found in Australia. It is commonly found hanging upside down holding to the limb of a tree with its tail. The young hang onto the mother's tail with their tails, making quite a spectacle. They do not live long in captivity. They feign death quite well, whence comes the phrase "playing possum." This seems to be a case of self-induced hypnosis, but the matter has never been taken up in too much detail.

The "teddy bear" or koala is also a marsupial, and it lives in the trees. The famous kangaroo lives only on the ground. Although gentle and tame in zoos and also quite timid, they are quite strong, and a blow from the hind leg of an infuriated kangaroo has been known to kill a man. They are seen bounding high in the air in nature, and are known to move with great rapidity. Some go as fast as forty-five miles per hour. They may cover a distance of thirty feet in a single leap and may rise to a height of twenty feet in their leaping. They are known as wallabies. It must be understood that all kangaroos are not so large. Some are no bigger than rats. They are disliked in Australia because they damage crops, and are shot for their hides.

Although the above three forms are the best known, there are many other marsupial types. There is the wombat, a bearlike form, which is harmless as is the koala and moves around at night. There is also a flying phalanger, which greatly resembles our flying squirrel with the ability to jump through the air and glides by using body flaps.

The Tasmanian devil, a marsupial which is not found in Australia but the nearby isle of Tasmania, is a carnivore. Much woe has been caused the sheepherders by this fierce animal whose large teeth resemble those of the lion. The marsupials present a group of animals which are quite interesting, some rare, but all pouched.



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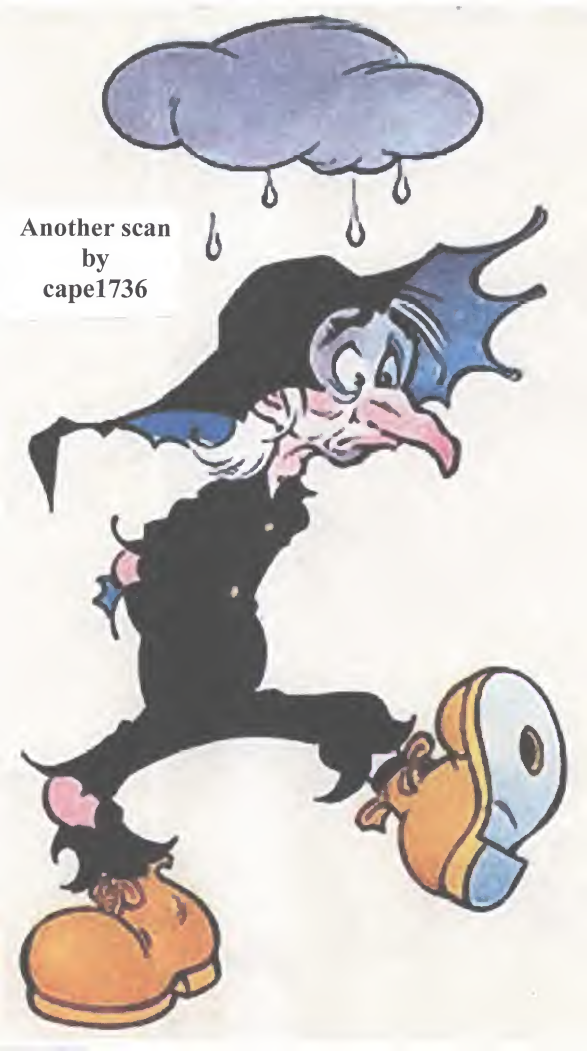
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THE SPHINX Legend says the Sphinx of Thebes was an actual, living creature, who posed a riddle for all comers. Oedipus solved it and the Sphinx killed herself. (See page 208 for complete story.)


Another scan
by
cape1736